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The Mennonite Canadians

Multicultural Canada Series
Series Consultant: Daniel Hill

The Mennonite Canadians

Joanne Flint

Van Nostrand Reinhold Ltd., Toronto
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LEARNING RESOURCES CENTRE
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Jacob Martin Comes to Canada

THE MOVE TO UPPER CANADA

Eleven-year-old Jacob Martin was the youngest son of an American Mennonite family that owned a prosperous farm in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. In 1804, he lived with his parents, grandparents, and five brothers and sisters near Hickory Town, a village about 90 km west of Philadelphia.

Fifty years earlier, Jacob's grandfather had emigrated from Switzerland to North America in search of a better life. Like most Mennonites, he had settled in Pennsylvania, where there was a growing community of German-speaking pioneers who shared his religious views. Now Jacob's father, Abraham, was thinking of moving.

Ever since the American Revolution had ended British rule in the Thirteen Colonies, Abraham Martin had found it increasingly difficult to stay true to his Mennonite beliefs. Each year he was fined for refusing to pay war taxes or to swear the oath of loyalty demanded by the new American government. He and his family were now forced to conduct their business and receive their schooling in English. These things worried Abraham, and he thought more and more about the freedom of language and religion, and the military exemption still available in British colonies to the north.

Abraham also knew that almost all the good farmland in Pennsylvania was claimed. This meant that his sons, whom he expected to be farmers, would have to look much further afield for their own land. He had heard that the soil in Upper Canada was very good and that thousands of people loyal to Britain had successfully migrated there. But so far, not many had been Mennonites.

Between 1776 and 1803, only a few adventurous Mennonite families from Lancaster had journeyed 650 km north to the

Between 1680 and 1776, over 3000 Mennonites moved from Switzerland to the British colonies in North America. This stone farmhouse was built in Pennsylvania in 1719 by Swiss Mennonites. Why do you think the roof is so slanted, the windows so small and the stone walls so thick?

The bottom of this Conestoga wagon is curved up from the centre to the sides and ends. It was purposely constructed this way so that if heavy loads happened to shift, they would settle in the centre of the wagon instead of pressing against the end-gates. The broad wheels reduced or slowed sinking in the mud; the wide axles prevented easy upsets; the canvas cover protected people and goods against rain, wind and snow.

wilderness of the Niagara area in Upper Canada, where land was plentiful and cheap. However, when news arrived that twenty-three Mennonite men had purchased 60 000 acres (about 24 000 ha) of land in the Waterloo area and were recruiting Mennonites to settle there, Abraham became more interested in moving.

He had many long talks with his wife Elizabeth and the older boys, and with his father, who knew all about pioneering. Finally, Abraham called everyone together and announced his decision to

1. Why did Mennonite families from Pennsylvania decide to move to Upper Canada?
2. Why were the Conestoga wagons a convenient way to travel?
3. Read the account of the Martins' journey to determine how far and how long they travelled and consult the map of their journey. With a current road map, determine the route you would travel today from Lancaster County to Waterloo County. Write a short report comparing the two trips. Consider: length of time needed to travel, meals, money, problems that could occur along the way.

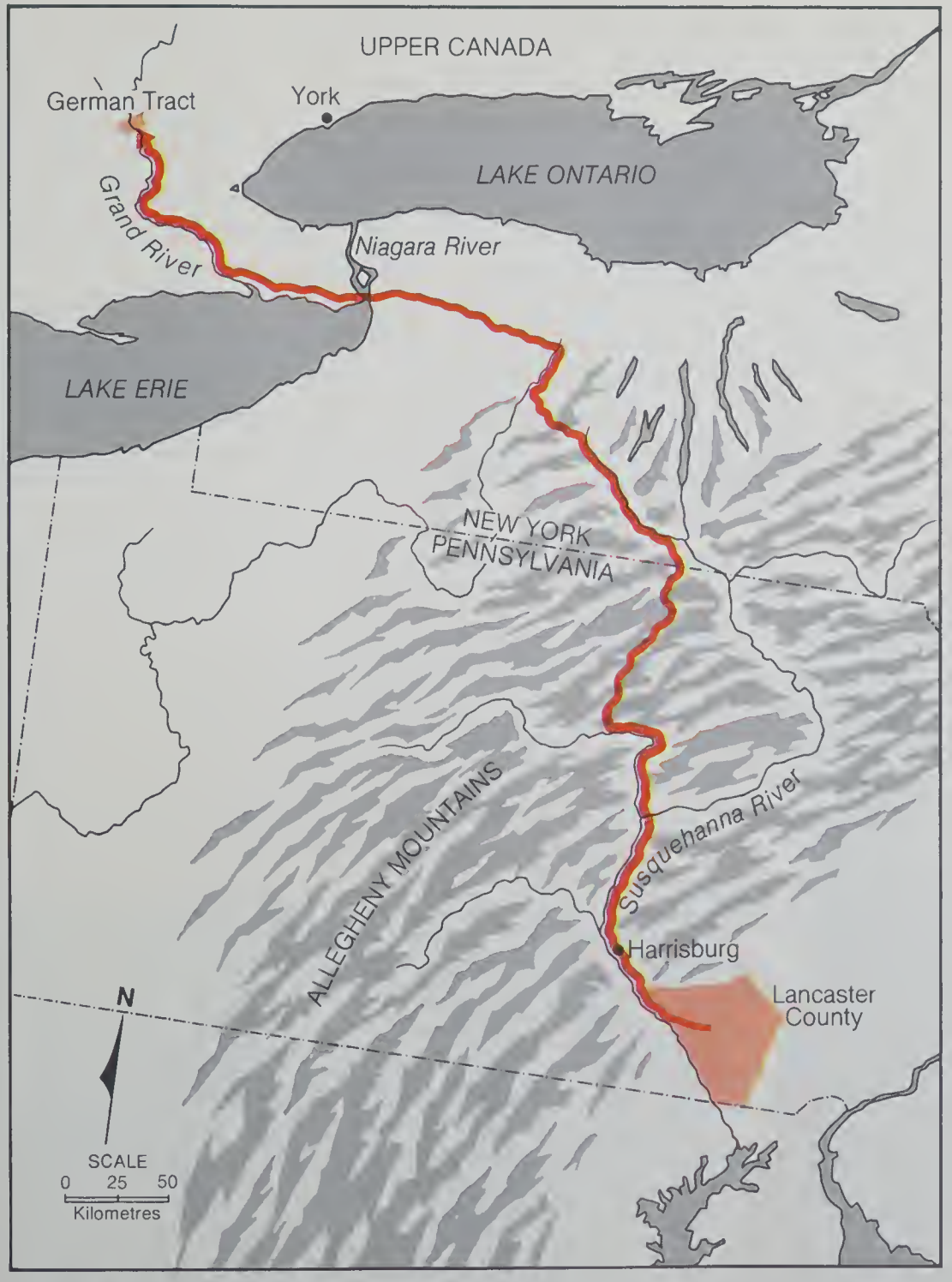
leave Pennsylvania. His elder sons, Ezra, Adam and David, were pleased because they knew that in Upper Canada they would be able to own large farms near one another. His daughter, Barbara, however, dreaded the thought of moving. She had heard stories of the long and exhausting journey north, and the harsh pioneer life and bitter winters that awaited them. Jacob and his younger sister Hilda were filled with excitement at the thought of going to a new country.

In April 1805, the Martins loaded everything they would need for pioneering into three large, newly painted Conestoga wagons. Jacob helped to pack food such as ham, dried fruit and flour, clothing and quilts, pots, dishes, a bundle of raw wool, and his mother's spinning wheel and loom. He added hoes, axes, a plough and seeds, some chickens in a coop, and three small apple seedlings. The large, heavy 100-year-old family Bible and two of his mother's *fraktur* paintings were carefully wrapped in a pillowcase and tucked in a dry, safe place among the quilts.

The loaded wagons were so heavy that it took four strong, patient horses to pull each one. The family cow was hitched to a rope that was tied to one of the wagons. Jacob was so excited about leaving that he almost forgot to say goodbye to his grandfather, who looked sad to see him go.

The Martins followed a route later called the "Conestoga Trail" after the wagons owned by the many Mennonites who travelled to Upper Canada. The trail led northward toward the Susquehanna River. It was more than 2 km wide where the family crossed on a large, clumsy raft propelled by a dozen sweating, shouting, hired oarsmen. Jacob didn't know how to swim, but found himself too busy calming the horses and shouting instructions to his little sister to be afraid of the deep water.

Once across the river, the Martins found themselves alone in the dark forest again. Their wagons squeeked and groaned along the many perilously high ridges and down into the deep valleys of the Allegheny mountains. Many times they lost their way and had to consult a compass, for the trail was overgrown and poorly marked. Sometimes trees had to be cut down or boulders removed before



Route Taken by the Martin Family from Pennsylvania to Upper Canada, 1805

Pennsylvania Dutch

The Mennonites who came to America from Switzerland spoke German. At Sunday worship they used a formal German called High German, the language of hymns and their Bible. At home they spoke a more informal kind of German. Over the years, a few English words and expressions crept into their every-day speech. This new form of German became known as Pennsylvania Dutch (*Deutsch*). It was also spoken by non-Mennonite German settlers.

The early German-speaking settlers brought to Canada many colourful sayings in Pennsylvania Dutch, for example:

'R faercht sich faer seim egne schatte.
(He's afraid of his own shadow.)

Hund as gautze beisse net.
(A barking dog seldom bites.)

'S hot grad so grose fisch im se as noch raus gfange sin waere.
(There are just as good fish in the sea as ever were caught.)

Can you put these expressions into your own words?

proceeding. At night Jacob and the men slept under the wagons or took turns guarding their food from bears.

For most of the seven-week journey, everyone walked. The women's long skirts caught in the undergrowth and became muddy in the swamps, some of which were more than 4 km long. One day the family travelled only one kilometre. Their wheels had sunk in the mud up to the axles and the wagons had to be unloaded and taken apart so that the wheels could be dug out and the wagons reassembled on firm ground. On days when it rained heavily, everyone huddled inside the wagons under the canopy roofs. Otherwise they plodded on through the bush.

Only Sundays were days of rest from travelling. On those mornings, father read aloud from the Bible, and the family gathered around to listen, sing hymns and say prayers of thanks to God. In the afternoon, they rested, mended harnesses, sharpened axes and baked bread for the coming week.

Jacob heard the thundering Niagara River first, and urged his family to hurry. When they finally came to the rushing water, he scrambled up a tree to get a better view of Upper Canada on the far shore. Instead of British settlements, all he could see was more dense forest. The family crossed the Niagara at a point where the river was calmer. There the horses and the cows swam across, and the wagons, plugged with moss to make them watertight, were paddled like boats across the water.

Thirty kilometres past the river the Martins came upon their first Upper Canadian Mennonite family—the Moyers. Their home was a disappointment to Jacob. It was not a proper two-storey house like the one he had left in Pennsylvania, but only a small, rough log cabin. Most of the Moyer land was still covered with maple, oak and birch trees. After a short visit, Jacob and his family pushed on north and west for the last 100 km to the German Tract, as the Mennonite-owned land in Waterloo had come to be known. Abraham planned to purchase about 1000 acres (about 400 ha) beside the Grand River with silver coins he carried in a leather bag. He knew that access to water was essential for farming and he hoped to find land where black walnut trees, a sign of excellent soil, grew.

Opposite page, left: Menno Simons was a Dutch Roman Catholic priest who renounced his church and was re-baptized in 1536. The followers of Menno Simons became known as Mennonites.

Opposite page, right: An artist's romantic impression of a prosperous Mennonite farmer and his wife in Switzerland, around 1824.

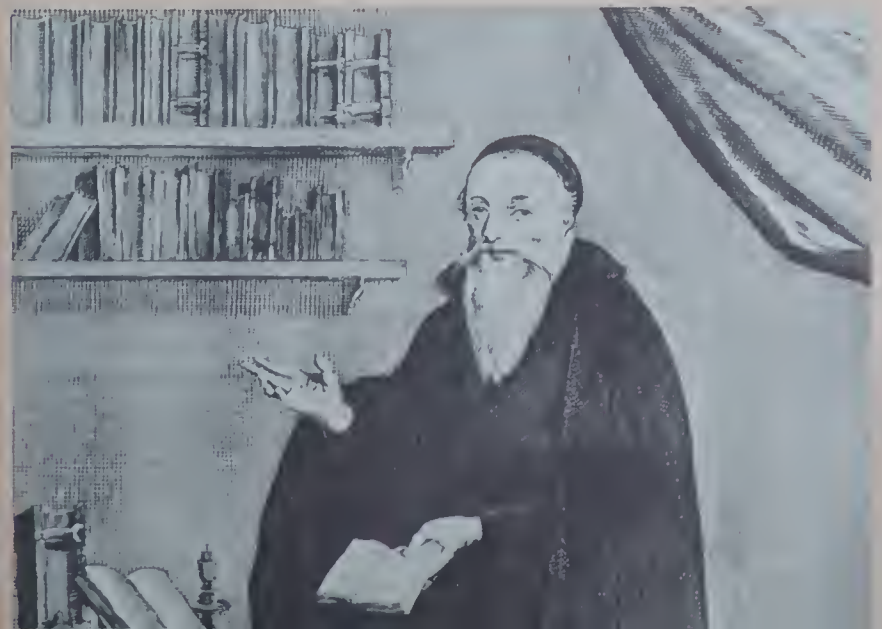
The First Mennonites

The first Mennonites were merchants, teachers and craftsmen who lived in Europe 450 years ago during the time of the Reformation, a sixteenth century movement to reform the Roman Catholic church. They were part of a group called Anabaptists (or *re-baptizers*) who felt that the Church had moved away from the principles revealed in the Bible. Mennonites believed that violence and war were against the teachings of Jesus and that people should be loyal to God rather than any government. Because the Mennonites' faith involved serious personal commitment, they baptized and accepted into their church only those old enough to make the choice for themselves.

In an age when European countries were often at war and it was the custom of the established church to baptize babies, not adults, the Mennonites were loathed. Church and state authorities tried to force them to recant—that is, publicly reject their beliefs. Those who refused were ridiculed and abused. Their property was often burned or taken from them, and thousands were tortured and killed; others fled to poor, frontier land in Holland, Switzerland and Prussia, and eventually to America and Russia.

To survive, the Mennonites had to cooperate with one another in farming, Bible study and schooling. As the years passed, German became their common language and they began to dress in plain, dark clothes. Gradually, their beliefs, customs, language and hardworking ways made them into a strong and distinct people.

1. In what European countries did early Mennonites live? Why did they move from place to place?
2. What are the central beliefs of Mennonites?



PIONEERING IN WATERLOO COUNTY

There was no road to the Martins' newly purchased property. With their heavy axes Jacob and his brothers cut a pathway through the woods so that the Conestoga wagons could be pulled into a grassy clearing near the river. The horses were untied and a loud, clanging bell was hung around the cow's neck. Then the family gathered rocks to build an outdoor fireplace.

For the next few weeks they slept in the wagons. They worked nearly every waking moment from Monday to Saturday, preparing the land for farming. The men cleared brush and chopped down trees that were sometimes as tall as 30 m, and as much as 2 m in diameter.

It is easy to see from this picture why Upper Canadian pioneers in the early 1800s felt so isolated. Look carefully at the people, buildings, animals, crops and stumps. Can you determine what time of year it is? What are the men in the foreground doing?

Then they lopped off the branches, laid the trunks flat on the ground and cut them into lengths that could be used to build a cabin. It was Jacob's job to rip the bark from the logs, taking care to save long strips from elm and basswood trees to make harnesses and rope the next spring. Occasionally, he was allowed to fish in the Grand River which flowed nearby or scout for bee hives, where he found honey, and maple trees, which would yield sap for maple sugar next spring.

After the logs had been hauled aside, the brush burned, and the ashes collected for potash, Jacob's brothers ploughed the soil between the stumps. It was hard work, for the ground was full of roots, but they were pleased with the rich soil. Potatoes, peas, corn, cabbage, onions and the apple seedlings brought from Pennsylvania were then planted by the women.

Every Sunday the Martins walked up to 8 km to be with the five closest Mennonite families. Since there was no church, they worshipped in each other's homes. They sang old, familiar hymns—some with as many as twenty-five verses—read the Bible, and listened to sermons given by a "deacon," a man whom they had elected from among themselves to give religious leadership. Each family brought food and stayed for a meal and a social visit afterwards. The Martins came to know their neighbours, exchanged news and described the progress on their property. The Sunday morning worship and visit was the highlight of their week. They looked forward to the time when they could take their turn as hosts.

When Jacob and his family had cleared and levelled the ground for their home site, and had cut, de-barked and squared off enough logs to build a cabin, fifty Mennonite men, women and children gathered for a "building bee." In just two days they built a log cabin with three windows, a door, a cedar shingled roof and a spacious loft. Then, four months after they had left Pennsylvania, the Martins moved their possessions out of the Conestoga wagons into their first Canadian home.

By the end of September they were pleased with the results of their hard work. In the cabin were beds made of fresh straw, laid over ropes strung across a wood frame. On the beds were down quilts.

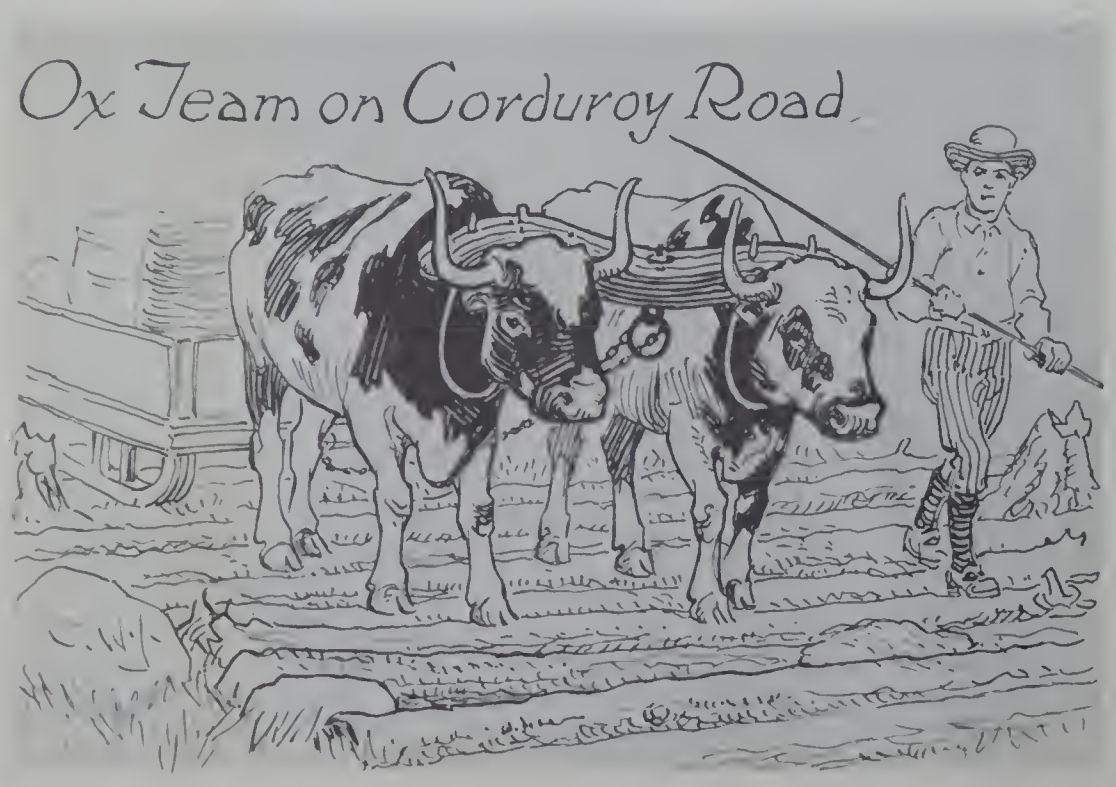
Above: The interior wall of a reconstructed pioneer cabin at the Doon Pioneer Village in Kitchener, Ontario. The mirror, with a picture painted on the bottom panel, was brought from Montgomery County, Pennsylvania in a Conestoga wagon by the Clemens family. Can you find the candlemold, the candle box, the hearth fire trivet? Note the homemade candles reflected in the mirror.

There was a fieldstone fireplace with a Dutch oven, built by Abraham, and a large walk-in cupboard for storing food. From the rafters hung strings of drying onions and wild berries gathered by Elizabeth and her daughters.

Outside, log shelters had been made for the livestock, and a root cellar had been dug into the side of a small hill and filled with home-grown vegetables. A smokehouse was built where hickory logs would be smouldered to cure hams and sausage. The family had milk from their cow to make butter and cheese, and fresh eggs each morning.

In the winter, Ezra built a wooden sleigh to carry timber and potash over snow-covered trails to be sold at Niagara. Jacob learned to snowshoe and spent most of his time outdoors, splitting cedar logs for fence rails and stocking up on firewood. Once Elizabeth Martin had assembled her spinning wheel, she set about spinning wool into yarn, and knitting stockings, shawls and sweaters for the family.

A pioneer log cabin with a stump fence.



Left: This sketch of a corduroy road suggests the roughness of the earliest roads. What use did the pioneers make of oxen?

1. Imagine that you are a Mennonite boy/girl who has moved to Upper Canada in 1805. Write a letter to a relative in Pennsylvania, describing your journey and your new home.
2. Find out how a corduroy road was constructed. (a) How did it get its name? (b) Why did the pioneers build this type of road? (c) What do you think travel over a corduroy road was like in a horse-drawn wagon?
3. Why were Mennonites successful pioneers in Upper Canada?

The Pennsylvania or Mennonite Banked Barn

Early in the 1800s Mennonite farmers began to construct large rectangular, two- and sometimes three-storey barns in Upper Canada. Their most distinguishing feature was a 2 m overhang along the southern side of the barn that provided a shelter for animals in cold, wet weather. The lower or foundation walls were usually made of stone and several doors under the overhang led to root cellars, feed bins, and stalls for pigs, cattle, horses and oxen.

When possible the barn was built into a hill to give easy access to the upper floor from the north. In the early days threshing was done here and, when the harvest was over, it served as a winter storage space for implements and vehicles. There were also small rooms or compartments called granaries, where grain was stored.

By the mid 1800s the banked barn had been widely copied and was the most common form of barn architecture seen in the Ontario countryside.

In the spring, Abraham and his sons ploughed the newly cleared land and sowed wheat, oats and barley among the stumps. The family bought another cow and three pigs and attended many "bees" with their neighbours—to make maple syrup, build barns, burn stumps and construct corduroy roads. When the community gathered to build a schoolhouse, the Martins were pleased, for they wanted their children to be taught Mennonite beliefs and to learn about their heritage. The school building would also be used for Sunday worship until a church, or meeting house, as the Mennonites preferred to call it, could be built.

A modern barn raising. Several Mennonites spent about a week organizing and laying out materials for this large banked barn. It then took 150 skilled men only two days to build it. They were well fed by crews of Mennonite women.

Schnitz and Schnitzing Bees

When Mennonites arrived in Upper Canada from Pennsylvania, they planted apple seedlings they had brought. Soon almost every homestead had an orchard. Apples were used to make cider, apple butter, or *schnitz* — dried apples.

The Mennonites, like many pioneers, gathered together for "bees" to help one another with time-consuming jobs such as clearing land and building barns. Young Mennonites particularly enjoyed schnitzing bees, at which apples were prepared for drying.

Hundreds of apples would be washed, peeled, quartered and cored. The apple slices were then carefully placed on a dryer, or *schnitz hotlie*, which had open slats that allowed the air to circulate around the apples. The apple-laden dryer was placed in the oven of a stove, near an open fireplace or in a special drying shed.

To make the work seem more enjoyable, the young people would chat, joke or sing folk songs. It was said that the girl with the longest apple peeling would have the longest married life. Sometimes a girl would throw her apple peeling over her left shoulder. The initial formed by the peeling was taken to be the first letter of the name of the boy she would marry.

After the apples were dried to a golden brown colour they were strung from the rafters and taken down throughout the winter when needed for desserts such as schnitz pie.

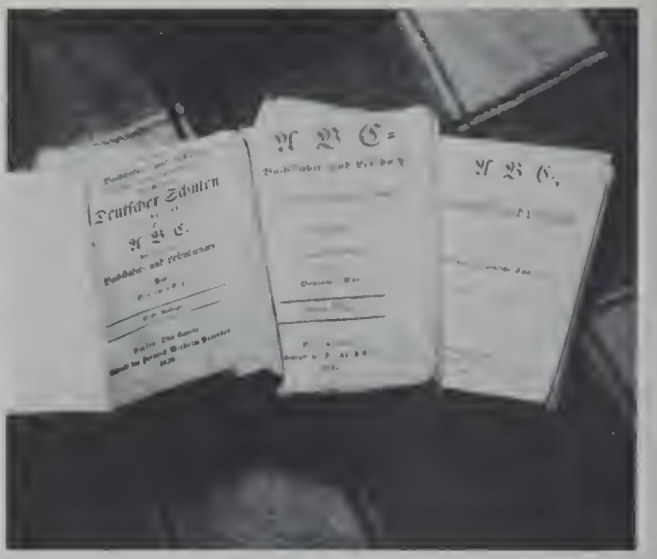
1. What other foods can be preserved by drying?
2. Consult books about pioneer life to find out what other ways pioneers preserved foods.

Above: Married women, such as these pictured at a schnitzing bee in Ontario, traditionally covered their heads with tidy caps called prayer veilings or "coverings" when at worship, and usually while working.

Opposite page: An apple peeler was securely fastened to a table and an apple was fixed on it by the bud or flower end. When the handle was turned the apple was neatly peeled, leaving one long peel per apple.

SCHOOL DAYS

On weekdays, Hilda and Jacob walked 5 km to school, carrying cloth sacks containing their lunches of bread, cheese, cake and dried fruit. Only when it was very cold or stormy were they allowed to stay home.



These Mennonite textbooks were written in German and printed by Benjamin Eby at his own expense. Eby was a famous teacher and preacher, and one of the first Canadian Mennonite bishops. He was also a farmer and a successful businessman who financed a printing press and newspaper.

This is the interior of a one-room country school. Boys and girls would be responsible for chopping and hauling wood for the stove. Many Mennonites disapproved of their children going to school beyond grade 8. There is an old Mennonite saying: "The more educated the more mixed up." Why might Mennonites have thought this way?

A Story from the Martyrs' Mirror
A Mennonite named Dirk Willems was running across a frozen lake to escape from a man who was trying to arrest him. When Willems heard calls for help from his pursuer, who had fallen through the ice, he went back and saved the man from drowning. But the ungrateful man arrested him, and later on Willems was burned at the stake because he would not give up his Mennonite beliefs.

1. Why did Mennonite parents think it important for their children to listen to the stories from the *Martyrs' Mirror*?
2. What would Jacob have learned about Mennonite values and beliefs from the story of Dirk Willems?

Their one-room log schoolhouse was heated by a sooty, pot-bellied wood stove in the middle of the room. At first there were no desks. The children sat on rough, wooden benches set in angled rows, the girls on one side of the room and boys on the other. The shortest, and usually the youngest, sat at the front. Children used individual slates and chalk, for they had no paper, pencils or pens. The Bible was their textbook, reader and speller.

A young Mennonite from Pennsylvania, who boarded at a nearby farm, taught the children Mennonite history. He explained the meaning of hymns they sang in church, which praised God and told about Mennonites in Europe long ago. He also read stories from an old book called the *Martyrs' Mirror*, which told how Mennonites almost three hundred years before had been tortured and exiled for refusing to change their beliefs. The more the teacher explained their heritage, the more Jacob wanted to be able to read the book for himself.

To do so, he would have to learn to speak and read High German, the language of the Mennonite Bible and hymns. Every day the class memorized Bible verses. The teacher corrected their pronunciation and made them say the words over and over again. Gradually High German became easier and Jacob found himself not only remembering the words but being interested in their meaning.

Jacob left school when he was fifteen. By then he was ready to work full-time on the family farm. Over the next few years, each of his elder brothers married and was given a quarter of the Martin land. His sisters married Mennonite men from the area and began to manage their own households and raise families. Following Mennonite tradition, Jacob, as the youngest son, stayed at home to help his parents. He knew that their farm would be his one day.

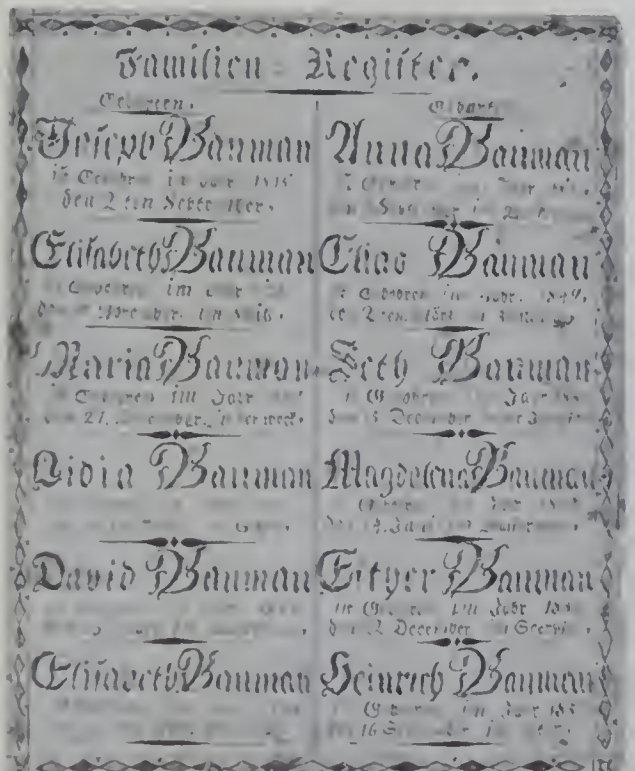
AMERICAN TIES

Though life in Upper Canada was difficult in the early 1800s, the Martins, who were already experienced farmers when they arrived, suffered little hardship. Their biggest problem was loneliness. They had come from a long-established Mennonite community in

Pennsylvania. Despite Sunday meetings, it was difficult to maintain such close relationships with other Mennonite families in Upper Canada because their farms were widely separated. Occasionally, settlers made the long journey back to Pennsylvania to visit family, marry or borrow money. When they returned they brought eagerly awaited letters and news from friends and relatives.

When war broke out between Great Britain and the United States in 1812, the Martins and the other Mennonites in Upper Canada were horrified. Immediately, the military exemption tax that every Mennonite man over eighteen had to pay was raised from 4 shillings to £5. Jacob, now nineteen, didn't mind paying the money, but he was very worried about his American cousins, who had no military exemptions. Would they be forced to fight? All visiting across the border stopped, and the Martins received no news from Pennsylvania for over two years. They did hear that the British forced Canadian Mennonites who lived close to the battle zones to transport food and supplies in their wagons to the battlefront. There they had witnessed bloody battles. For once Jacob was glad that he lived in a sparsely populated area with poor roads.

He was thankful when the war ended in 1814 and he learned that his Pennsylvania relatives were unharmed. The visiting resumed and every year more Mennonite families decided to move north. Old congregations grew and new ones were formed as each wave of Mennonite settlers gathered together to worship and help each other. The Mennonites respected and obeyed the laws of Upper Canada and, with few exceptions, quietly kept to farming.



This carefully hand-printed and illustrated document records the birth dates of Joseph and Elizabeth Bauman (top of the left column) and the birth dates of their children. What does it tell you about the Bauman family?

BAPTISM

In 1816, when he was twenty-three years old, Jacob made the most important decision of his life: to be baptized and admitted into the Mennonite church. His whole life had been spent preparing for this decision: his early schooling in High German and in Mennonite history, silent prayers before each meal, family Bible reading, weekly attendance at church, hymns, sermons, discussions about the Bible, and most of all his daily life in a Mennonite community.

The short baptismal ceremony was held during Sunday worship. Jacob and his parents parked their horse and buggy in the U-shaped drive shed before entering the recently built, plain white, frame meeting house. The interior was simple, almost severe. There were no pictures or statues, no stained glass windows, no organ or piano. A centre aisle separated rows of wooden pews where men and women sat facing a table, behind which were placed chairs for the elders, the elected leaders of the congregation.

Standing in front of the congregation, Jacob made three promises: to renounce the world and its sin, to be obedient and faithful to Christ, and to obey the rules of the church. Then he knelt while the minister sprinkled water (the Biblical sign of baptism) on his head and said, "I baptize you in the name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit." Next he reached down with his right hand, drew Jacob up, and welcomed him into the fellowship of the church. Jacob was now a Mennonite. He realized that henceforth, if he did foolish things like drinking too much whiskey or wine, swearing, cheating or lying, he would be "shunned." This meant that no Mennonite would talk to him or associate with him until he publicly repented.

Jacob's family proudly realized that his baptism was a sign that he wanted to "settle down"—a desire sparked by twenty-year-old Susannah Bowman, eldest daughter of a prosperous Mennonite farmer from the United States. She and Jacob had met a year earlier at a "bee" held to build a large banked barn.

Every Sunday evening since then, Jacob had been visiting with Susannah's family. At first he talked only with her father. Gradually, however, Mrs. Bowman and Susannah joined the conversation. They talked about the church, their families and their American friends and relatives. Jacob admired Susannah's fine sewing and she inquired about the Martin farm, and the new addition that Jacob was building onto the old log cabin. No one seemed to mind that he often stayed late. Jacob realized that the Bowmans approved of him when they occasionally left him and Susannah alone.

Jacob was pleased when Susannah agreed to marry him. He

Church Elders

The elders of congregations in the 1800s were a minister, who preached sermons; a deacon, who assisted the minister in important congregational decisions; and a bishop, who oversaw groups of congregations, and visited each congregation occasionally.

These men not only led the worship and performed special ceremonies such as baptisms and funerals, but were also in charge of community discipline. When a church member did something wrong, a complaint was made to the elders. If they found the offender guilty, he or she would either have to make proper amends or be barred from worship—a dreaded alternative, because the church was the centre of Mennonite family, social and religious life.

Above: This birth certificate was hand-printed and illustrated by Abraham Hoover's brother.

Opposite page: Mennonite meeting houses were used as places of worship and often as community centres and schools.

1. Why do you think that traditional Mennonite meeting houses have no pictures, crosses or stained glass windows?
2. What skills would a girl such as Susannah have learned from her mother?

knew that she would make a good household manager. She had learned from her mother how to plant and tend a garden and how to use brine, smoke and sugar to preserve food. She was also an expert in using a wood stove and could bake bread, two-crust pies, cakes and brownies without recipe books.

THE WEDDING

Following Mennonite custom, Susannah Bowman stayed home on the Sunday morning in October when her forthcoming marriage to Jacob was announced in church. Even Jacob left the service before the announcement or "banns" were read. Afterwards he rode on horseback to the homes of their friends and relatives to invite them to the wedding, which would be held at Susannah's home on a Thursday morning in two-and-a-half weeks. Everyone seemed delighted and surprised, although some, having noticed the celery (food especially associated with weddings) growing in the Bowman garden the past summer, and the increased amount of sewing and quilting being done by the Bowman women, had suspected that a marriage was being planned.

Jacob and Susannah's wedding announcement set in motion two busy weeks of preparation. Many of the guests prepared special food: sweet puddings and cakes, sour pickles, cider, vegetables and meat (especially pork, for most Mennonites sold their beef to English settlers). Gifts such as china, cloth and lace were purchased. Susannah hand-stitched Jacob's wedding shirt and made herself a blue muslin wedding dress. It was in the same style as her everyday dresses—long skirt, gathered waist, high neckline and long sleeves.

On her sixteenth birthday Susannah's family had given her a large pine box with a hinged lid called a hope chest. In it she had stored bed linen and hand-stitched patchwork quilts, colourful home-woven scatter rugs, "show towels" embroidered with designs of birds and flowers, household utensils, and treasures such as mirrors, needles, prayer books and petticoats, all carefully made or purchased in anticipation of her marriage. Now she prepared to move her hope chest to the Martin farm.

1. What traditions and customs did Jacob and Susannah follow at their wedding? Describe other wedding customs you are familiar with.

2. What was the purpose of grossdoddy houses? What advantages did they provide?

The wedding guests, dressed in their formal black Sunday clothes, gathered around the young couple in Susannah's home, men on one side, women on the other. Benjamin Eby, bishop of both Jacob's and Susannah's congregations, preached eloquently and quietly about the duties of husbands and wives, and quoted many verses from the Bible. Susannah and Jacob then came forward and joined hands. Bishop Eby heard their pledges to one another and pronounced them man and wife. Though the couple did not exchange or wear rings, Jacob would grow a beard and Susannah would exchange her black bonnet for a white one to indicate to the world that they were married. The ceremony included a blessing and a prayer. Susannah rejoined the women, and Jacob the men, and the congregation recited more prayers and sang a hymn.

Then it was time to celebrate. The festivities began with a large wedding lunch held at the bride's home. Jacob and Susannah sat next to each other at the corner of a table, and all the young people paired off and jostled to sit close to them. After they had eaten, they mopped their plates clean with chunks of bread. Cookies were freely dunked in tea, and homemade wine was served (as it was at the wedding Jesus attended at Cana). After the meal everyone sang hymns and visited for the afternoon. Many of the 250 guests had come by horse and buggy from great distances, so there was news to exchange. After a wedding supper the older people went home, while the younger ones swept the upper floor of the barn and hung lanterns from the cross-beams in preparation for boisterous folk dances allowed only at wedding parties. A light meal was served towards midnight.

After the last guest had departed, Jacob and Susannah helped to tidy up. They stayed for a day or two with the Bowmans and then spent a week-long honeymoon visiting as many relatives as possible. Finally Susannah moved to the Martin farm to live with her in-laws. Her name was entered alongside Jacob's in the old family Bible, and their marriage certificate, beautifully decorated with pictures of doves, trees, hearts and vines, was carefully hung in the front room.

THE GROSSDODDY HOUSE

Eventually Jacob and Susannah had seven children and, as they were born, the Martin house—even with a large, two-storey addition—became more and more crowded. It was time for Abraham and Elizabeth Martin to move next door into a small retirement home of their own called a *grossdoddy* (grandfather) house. "Close enough for comfort but apart for privacy" was the way Elizabeth described it. For generations, Mennonites had been building grossdoddy houses; sometimes they were joined to the main farmhouse. The senior Martins decided that theirs should be detached. With the help of Mennonites from their congregation, it took them only two days to raise the new one-storey house.

Jacob and his sons painted it white, trimmed with blue. Soon Elizabeth planted delphiniums, lilies, pansies and morning glories in the front garden, and put a rocking chair on the porch for Abraham. The older Martins shared Susannah's large backyard garden, smokehouse and root cellar.

When Abraham Martin died, his body was washed and dressed by Jacob's sisters and then laid in a plain oak coffin that rested on two straight-backed chairs in the front room of the Martin farmhouse. Mourners came from miles around to pay their respects, share a cup of tea with Jacob and Susannah, and reminisce. Although they would miss Abraham, they believed he was at peace with the Lord.

A friend composed a long poem about Abraham's life, his faith and his good deeds, which was chanted in a slow, solemn manner during the funeral, held in the meeting house five days after his death. His grave in the Mennonite cemetery was marked with a plain white tombstone on which only his name and the dates of his birth and death were engraved. When his wife died, her body was buried beside his. Theirs were the first graves in a row set aside for the Martin family.

Here, modern Mennonites are repairing old gravestones. Many mark the graves of members of the Reesor family, prominent in the Markham area (near Toronto) through the 1800s and early 1900s. Notice the meaningful symbols engraved on the stones: the handshake of friendliness, an open Bible and the flower, a symbol of God's creation.

JACOB'S CHILDREN

Jacob and Susannah's three girls and four boys, though they grew up on the family farm in a Mennonite community, lived in a changing world. Over the years, many English-speaking families moved into the neighbourhood. Then the Mennonites, who had never formed more than ten per cent of the population of Waterloo County, became a smaller minority than ever.

After 1834, a provincial public school system was organized and the original Mennonite school that Jacob had attended became part of this system. Thereafter, his children were taught English and shared their desks with non-Mennonite children.

Lasting friendships were formed. Jacob's children became interested in the way their English friends dressed and acted and began to object to wearing traditional Mennonite clothes. As they grew older, they read English journals and newspapers and looked forward to going to market on Saturday mornings and talking with English-speaking townsfolk. They wanted to attend county fairs and political meetings as their non-Mennonite friends did.

St. Jacobs, Ontario, around 1880. Mennonites established businesses in towns such as this.

Early Mennonite Achievements

The Mennonites who settled in Upper Canada were skilled farmers. Their farm practices, such as the rotation of crops, were copied widely, as were their labour-saving and practical banked barns. They introduced cider and brandy-making to Upper Canada and grew apples, peaches and pears especially for that purpose. They found a ready market for their walnut and cherry wood in the United States and Europe, especially after the Welland Canal opened in 1831.

John Erb constructed the first Mennonite grist mill on the Grand River in the early 1800s, and soon other Mennonites took advantage of the increased production of milk, horses, sheep and cattle to open butter and cheese factories, blacksmith shops and tanneries.

By the time of Confederation in 1867 many Mennonites were operating successful businesses in towns. They owned furniture and shoe factories, printed newspapers and books in both German and English, dealt in farm implements, and processed meat. Their products became well known for high quality and sold widely.

1. In what ways was the Mennonite community in Waterloo changing? In what ways did it remain the same?
2. Why do values and beliefs sometimes change from generation to generation?

So that their children could continue to learn about their heritage, the Martins' congregation decided to open a school on Sunday afternoons. Here children were taught to speak and read High German. But some of the younger Martins were becoming impatient with Mennonite traditions. They complained that the slow, solemn forms of worship seemed too rigid and formal.

Thus influenced by their young people, many Mennonite churches began to change. Some moved more quickly than others to using musical instruments, singing in four-part harmony, opening Sunday schools and delivering sermons in English. Gradually it came to be that, although Mennonites maintained their essential beliefs, no two congregations were exactly alike in practice.

Jacob and Susannah were proud of their children and were pleased to see them all baptized and married to Mennonites. Their eldest son, Abram, went with his bride to the next county to pioneer on cheaper farmland. Another son, Ezra, became interested in the furniture business and moved 6 km to the growing town of Berlin (now Kitchener) to be closer to the factory in which he worked. Two of their daughters, Barbara and Agnes, married Mennonite farmers and lived nearby, while the youngest, Margaret, settled with her husband in the Niagara region, where he owned a sawmill.

The youngest son, Jonathan, who was the most studious of the family, was encouraged by Jacob to go to continuation school and teachers' college. Thus the tradition which held that the youngest son should stay on the family farm was broken. The second youngest son, Daniel, who wanted to be a farmer, stayed home instead. When Daniel married Rachel Shantz and they began their family, the grossdoddy house, which had stood empty since Elizabeth Martin had died, was aired and repainted. Then Jacob and Susannah moved in.

All the Martin children kept the Mennonite traditions of neighbourliness, thriftiness, church-going and the Pennsylvania Dutch language, even if they did speak English more and more. By the time Jacob's grandchildren were grown and making choices between careers in the city and traditional life on the farm, a new wave of Mennonite immigration to Canada was about to begin.

HIGHLIGHT

Fraktur Art and Quilting

The Pennsylvania Mennonites brought to Upper Canada their long-established traditions of fraktur art and quilting. *Fraktur* is the name given to the meaningful symbols and distinctive style of Mennonite art. Because Mennonites believed that they should not represent Jesus or God the Father directly, they expressed their religious feelings through pictures of God's creations such as birds, trees and flowers. Many of their Bibles and important family documents were decorated with elaborate handwriting and colourful pen and wash drawings of willow trees, doves and peacocks, and hearts and vines.

Although this intricate and time-consuming form of fraktur art is rarely done today, Mennonites continue to paint or carve their favourite symbols on chairs, hope chests, clocks and occasionally, barns. Women still embroider tulip, rose, star and heart motifs on towels, pillowcases and samplers or appliqué these designs onto quilts. Their work is prized for its fine needlework and traditional German designs.

1. Invite an expert quilter to your class to talk about the skills and materials required to make a quilt.

Left: Fraktur artists, who were primarily women, made their own watercolours, or dyed thread for needlework, by using natural sources such as roots and leaves. Black ink, which had to be bought, was used sparingly. The artists worked with quill pens and horsehair brushes, and often included their name and the date in their designs.

Opposite page, above: Some traditional quilting patterns, from left to right: Star of Bethlehem, Hole in the Barn Door, Hovering Hawks.

Opposite page, below: Thrifty Mennonite women hand-sew scraps of cloth into colourful artistic combinations, both plain and intricate, and attach them with tiny even stitches to a cotton backing to create a quilt. A lining or filler of goose down or wool is often secured between the patchwork and the backing to make the quilt warmer.

Make a Quilted Pot Holder

Materials Needed

for patchwork top: two 10 cm x 20 cm pieces of cotton cloth in contrasting colours
for the centre filling: cotton or polyester batting
for the backing: one 20 cm x 20 cm square of cotton cloth
for the binding: four strips of cotton, 7 cm x 20 cm
sewing scissors, quilting needle, pins, thread

Making the Patchwork Top

1. Cut each of the 10 cm x 20 cm pieces into two 10 cm x 10 cm squares. Cut each square on the diagonal. You now have eight triangles.
2. **With right sides together,** pin contrasting triangles together along their longest edges. Stitch with a running stitch 1 cm in from edge.
3. Open out and press. You now have four squares.
4. **With right sides together,** pin two squares along one edge so that same-coloured triangles are touching. Stitch with a running stitch 1 cm in from edge. Repeat with other two squares.
5. Open out and press the two rectangles.
6. **With right sides together,** pin rectangles along the long edge so that same-coloured triangles touch. Stitch 1 cm in from edge. Open and press.

Quilting the Layers

1. Spread the backing on a clean, flat surface, **right side down.** Spread the batting, measured to size, evenly on the backing.
2. Spread the patchwork top over the batting and pin all the layers together around the edge, being careful to keep the layers smooth. Baste all the layers together, stitching from the centre toward the edges, as shown in Figure 1.
3. Quilt the layers together, using small neat running stitches. Your lines of quilting stitches should follow all edges of the triangles, about 1.5 cm in from the edge, as in Figure 2.
4. Remove the basting threads carefully.

Binding the Edges

1. Trim excess batting and backing.
2. Press under one long edge of each 7 cm x 20 cm binding strip, to a depth of 1 cm.
3. With right sides together, pin the raw unfolded edge of one binding strip to one edge of the top of the quilted square. Stitch with running stitch.
4. Repeat on the other three sides. Your stitches will cross over at the corners.
5. Fold the binding strips over the edge of the square and stitch the folded edges to the back. Fold under the raw edge at the corners and stitch neatly.

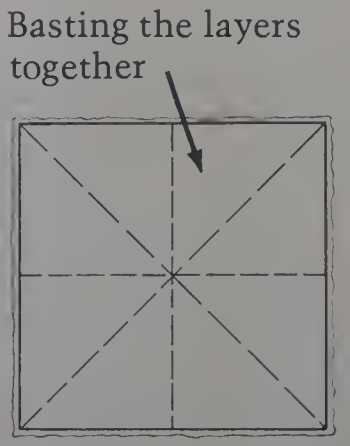


Figure 1
back of pot holder

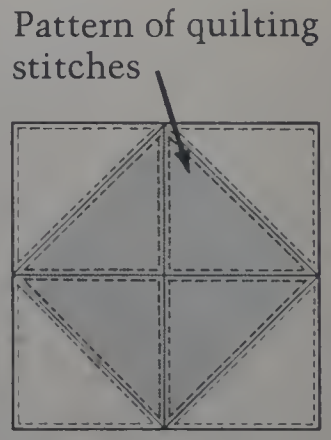


Figure 2
front of pot holder

Old Order Mennonites

Early in the 1800s, a small number of North American Mennonites became concerned when they saw many of their brethren beginning to speak English in school, in town, and sometimes at home. Some of them were also shortening Sunday worship, wearing modern clothes, and starting businesses. The worried Mennonites felt that these changes would destroy traditional Mennonite religious convictions and community life.

It seemed to them that returning to the disciplined way of life and dress of their seventeenth-century ancestors would strengthen their faith. The Old Order Mennonites, as the small strict group came to be called, wore plain, dark-coloured, buttonless clothes that they sewed by hand. They also shunned, that is, refused to speak to or acknowledge, delinquent members—even if they were family members or close friends—until they publicly repented.

Over the years, members of the Old Order have retained their German language for worship and conversation among themselves. They are still farmers, for they believe that only by working the land can they remain self-sufficient and apart from the influence of the rest of society. Women stay home to look after the family, and children are sent to Mennonite elementary schools. The girls and boys are well-trained by their parents in housekeeping and farming skills and generally leave school after Grade 8. Most Old Order Mennonites do not accept old age pensions or family allowances because they believe that to do so would encourage them to be dependent on the government rather than on each other.

The Old Order Mennonites resist changes in technology. They feel no need for telephones, radios or television sets in their homes, and do not own cars. However, when the majority approves, some small changes are allowed and monitored by a bishop. Today, for example, many Old Order Mennonite farmers use stationary diesel-powered farm machinery. A few have begun commercial harness and stove-making businesses, but they manufacture these things without electricity.

Although there are only about 1500 Old Order Mennonites in Canada, most of them in Ontario, many people think that all Mennonites live as the Old Order does because they are the most easily recognized. They can be seen in the Waterloo area wearing their distinctive clothes and driving horse-drawn buggies along main highways on their way to town, market or church.

1. Why would it be easier for the Old Order Mennonites to continue their way of life in the country rather than in the city?
2. Plan a day without radio, television, telephone, cars, washer and dryer, tape recorder, calculator, etc. Write a short report on how you spent your time and how you felt about your day.

Left and above: Children of Old Order Mennonites are often dressed colourfully but as they grow older they wear darker clothes.

Old Order Mennonites avoid brightly coloured clothes and fancy buttons, for these they associate with soldiers' uniforms and war. Instead, they dress in an old-fashioned style to imitate their ancestors, and to discourage vanity.

Greta Janzen Comes to Canada

LEAVING RUSSIA

In 1874, thirteen-year-old Greta Janzen lived with her parents, her older brother Gerhard, and younger sister Tina in a small Mennonite village in a dry, flat area of southern Russia. Everyone there belonged to the *Kleine Gemeinde* ("little church")—the stricter of the two Mennonite churches. Her father and the other men of the town raised cattle and grew flax on the land surrounding the village.

Nearly one hundred years earlier, Mennonites from several European countries had immigrated to Russia because they had been promised cheap land, guaranteed exemption from military service and freedom of worship, and given the right to speak German and govern their own affairs. Now all this was changing. Orders had come from the government that Russian should be taught in every school, and that all young men must spend some time in the army.

Greta's parents, Cornelius and Edna Janzen, were worried that Gerhard, who was fifteen, would soon be forced to join the Russian army. After hearing that Canada had set aside special land for Mennonites and would guarantee language rights and exemptions from military service, the Janzens decided to move there as soon as possible. Cornelius Janzen sold his cattle, chickens, pigs and land to another Mennonite for $800—far below their value. He shared some of his money with other families who wanted to move to North America but did not have land to sell.

The Russian government was still trying to persuade Mennonites to stay, and the Janzens were delayed in leaving because they had trouble obtaining passports. Their application papers were returned several times, with the excuse that they were filled out incorrectly. Finally, when Cornelius offered extra money

Opposite page: This Mennonite home, with its attached barn, was in Blumenort, one of the 95 Mennonite villages in Southern Russia.

A group of Mennonite forestry workers in Russia. At one time, young Mennonite men were allowed to work in hospitals and forestry camps or to develop land instead of serving in the Russian army. After 1872, military service became compulsory. Guitars, such as the one in this picture, were popular instruments and, along with mouth organs, provided music for community songfests.

as a bribe, he received his passport and permission to leave. Government officials demanded that he pay five years' taxes in advance. It seemed to Greta that they would never get away.

She and her mother and Tina had been selling or giving away all their possessions—tables, chairs, brooms, lamps, beds—anything that was too big and heavy to carry. Into two large wooden trunks they packed a sewing machine, sheepskin coats, hats and mittens, small tools, linen, knitted stockings and underwear, sweaters, a pot and some cutlery, dishes, needles and seeds. They also found space for a few small family treasures, such as their Bible, Tina's doll and father's watch.

When it was finally time to depart, Cornelius paid sixty-eight rubles for the week-long wagon and train trip to the port of Hamburg in Germany. The trunks were heaved aboard a wagon, and Edna filled a sack with buns, peppernuts, cherries and honey for

everybody to eat along the way. As Greta was lifted into the wagon and settled on top of a pile of blankets, she took one last look at her tidy village with its church, neat brick houses, barns, school, shops and small cheese and harness factories. She bade goodbye to her friends, her favorite cousin Hans and other relatives, fearing she would never see them again. Shutting her eyes to keep back the tears, she forced herself to think of the long journey ahead. How exciting it would be to ride on a train and see the ocean!

THE LONG JOURNEY TO CANADA

At Hamburg the Janzens joined Mennonites from other parts of Russia, who were also destined for Winnipeg, capital of the new province of Manitoba in Canada. First they travelled by freighter and train to the English port of Liverpool, where they waited for two weeks in crowded immigrant dockside sheds for ships to take them across the North Atlantic.

It was late July before the Janzens set sail. By then most of the Mennonites who had left Russia had already sailed before them. For twenty terrible days Greta and her family lived at sea. At night they slept below deck on mattresses that shifted when the small ship rolled and pitched. Once Greta and Gerhard were awakened when their heads crashed into the side of the ship. All around her Greta listened to other immigrants speaking strange languages—Dutch, English, Swedish.

The passengers were fed only flour soup and bread and butter. This combined with the continual rocking motion of the boat, made Greta sick to her stomach. Two weeks into the voyage, she watched sadly as the bodies of two young children, wrapped in rough canvas and weighted down with iron bars, were buried at sea.

Near the coast of Newfoundland, Greta saw icebergs for the first time in her life. She was frightened by the dense fog, which caused the ship to go off-course and almost crash on the rocky shores.

The Janzens finally stepped ashore at Halifax, thankful that they had survived. However, as soon as Canadian customs officials had checked to make sure that they were healthy and had inspected

1. Compare the Janzens' reasons for leaving Russia with the Martins' reasons for leaving the United States. In what ways were they similar?
2. Why did the Canadian government encourage the Mennonites to come to Canada at this time?

This drawing shows the arrival of the first colony of Mennonites at Fort Garry in Manitoba. From the picture can you tell where this steamer originated? How it was powered? What does its construction tell you about the rivers on which it travelled?

their baggage, they were put aboard a smaller ship sailing to Quebec. Upon arrival there, they were quickly transferred to wooden railway cars. All the benches were filled, so, still feeling weak and ill, the Janzens sat on the floor and leaned against their trunks. For several days the train creaked and swayed westward. By now it was almost September, and Greta's worried father knew that they would not arrive in Manitoba in time to build a house before winter.

While most of the immigrants on board the train continued on to the Prairies, Cornelius Janzen was persuaded by Ontario Mennonites who met him in Toronto to stay the winter in Waterloo County. Greta was silent, weary and sad when she was taken by train and buggy to the home of Daniel and Rachel Martin. For eight

1. Study the list of items the Janzens brought to Canada and discuss why they included them.
2. Imagine that you are one of the Janzens travelling to Canada and that you are keeping a diary. Write a series of entries in your diary describing your experiences and feelings during the journey.
3. What dangers did immigrants face in crossing the Atlantic at this time?
4. Though the Janzen and Martin families were both Mennonite, there were some obvious differences between them. In what ways did they differ? In what ways were they the same? How do you account for the differences?

weeks she hadn't had a bath, washed her clothes, or slept in a proper bed. She ached and was itchy all over. And she had difficulty understanding the Martins' Pennsylvania Dutch.

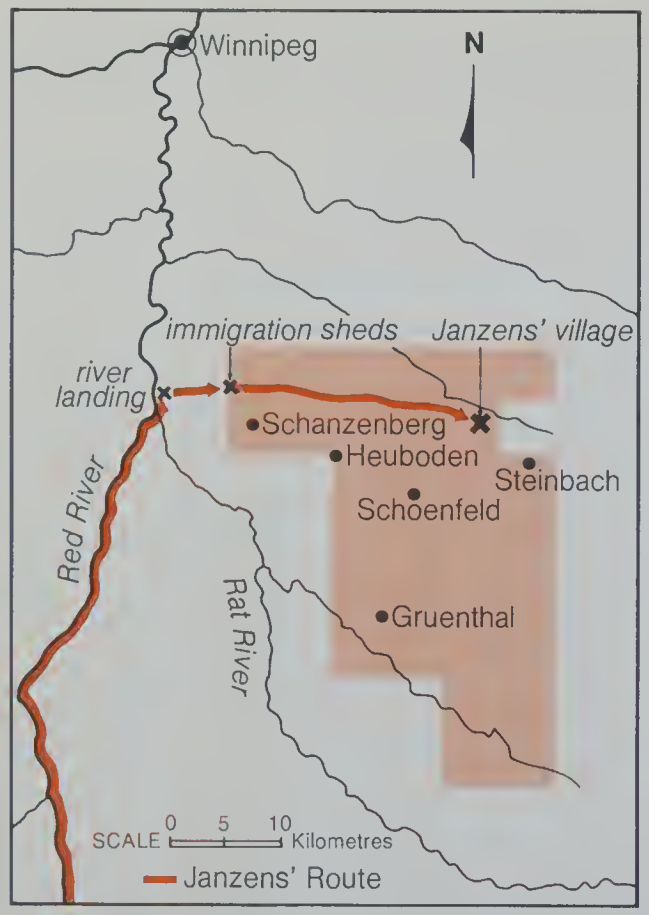
Cornelius and Gerhard were hired to work on the prosperous Martin farm for the winter. They were surprised that Mennonites in Ontario spoke English so often, and that so many of their children attended public schools. Though she would not discard her *babushka* (head scarf), Edna Janzen was persuaded by Rachel Martin to make Greta and Tina their first brightly coloured dresses and bonnets. Both Janzen girls wanted to make a good impression on their hosts. They gladly helped the Martin women to make quilts, milk cows and churn the milk to butter.

The Janzens attended community worship and "bees" with the Martins, visited the market in Berlin and collected money to aid hungry Mennonite settlers in Manitoba. Everyone was especially fond of Grandpa Jacob, now eighty-two years old, who told many stories about pioneering in Upper Canada. Just before Greta left for the Prairies, he presented her with an apple seedling to plant in Manitoba.

FINDING A HOME ON THE PRAIRIES

In May 1875, the Janzens travelled by boat across the Great Lakes towards Duluth, Minnesota, where they boarded a train. As it chugged westward through Minnesota, some Americans tried to persuade Cornelius to buy his own large farm in Kansas, as many other Mennonites had done. But he missed village life and was determined for Gerhard's sake to live in Canada, where military and language exemptions were guaranteed, and Mennonite schools were permitted.

At Moorhead, Minnesota, the Janzens transferred to a steam boat and began a slow 650 km trip down the twisting, swollen Red River through the wild, flat countryside. A week later they reached the junction of the Red and Rat Rivers, where they disembarked and walked 6 km east across the prairie to the immigration headquarters —four hastily erected, unpainted wooden shacks with leaky roofs



East Reserve, With Some of the First Mennonite Settlements in Manitoba

and dirt floors. The buildings, already crowded with Mennonite immigrants, had been divided by curtains into twelve rooms in an attempt to create some privacy. But the Janzens didn't mind the miserable conditions. They felt shivers of happiness to find other Kleine Gemeinde families, to hear the old familiar hymns sung again, and to listen to sermons preached in German. The sheds were to be their home for the next three weeks.

During this time, Cornelius travelled to Winnipeg to register for land and to buy homesteading supplies: a wagon and two oxen, a wood stove, pots, pans, flour, sugar, lard, cloth, a rake, bucket, shovel and a butter churn. He was fortunate to find a cow for sale.

The Canadian government had set aside for the Mennonites 500 000 acres (over 200 000 ha) of land in two large blocks—one to the east and one to the west of the Red River. Within those reserves they were allowed to live wherever and in whatever fashion they wished. Cornelius selected his 160 acres (about 65 ha) beside a river on the East Reserve, in order to be near ten other Kleine Gemeinde families.

On a bright, windy June day the Janzens set out to travel 25 km east across the prairie to their land. The oxen plodded along two barely visible ruts made by another wagon. They went through thick, sticky mud called "gumbo" and around large ponds of stagnant water called sloughs, where hundreds of wild ducks and geese fed on wild rice. Occasionally they saw small, distant Mennonite settlements but they had no time to detour for a visit.

Late in the afternoon Cornelius stopped the wagon, consulted his map, and announced that they were finally home. Puzzled, Greta looked around her. She could see nothing but flat land covered with knee-high prairie grass and a clump of poplar trees far away. She could hear the faint gurgle of an unseen river. That was all. For this she had come 16 000 km and travelled over a year! She felt forlorn, and very disappointed.

Suddenly the Janzens were hailed by a family in the distance. Soon another arrived and, within the hour, five more. Greta recognized a girl about her age from the immigration shed, and waved.

A MANITOBA MENNONITE VILLAGE

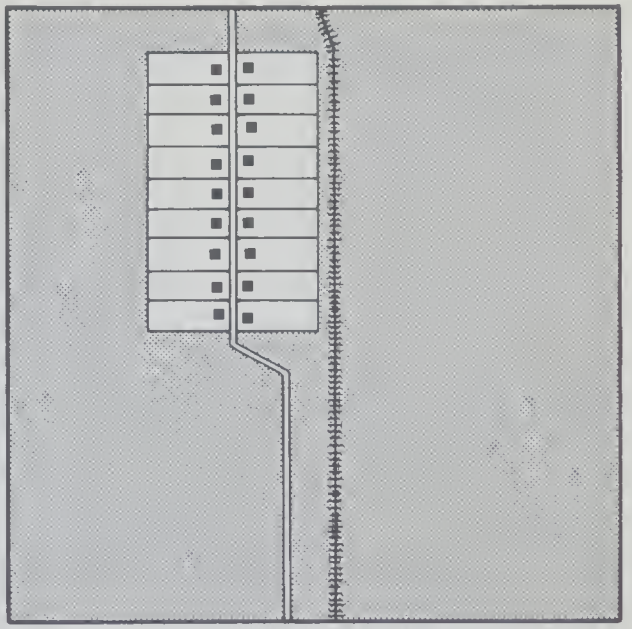
The Kleine Gemeinde families decided to pool their land and set up a Russian-style Mennonite village. After choosing a leader — called a *Shultz* — the men drew up plans. Two-and-a-half hectare plots were laid out, each with the 67 m frontage on one side of the main road that would be built parallel to the river. Each lot was numbered from one to twenty. (Lots on the other side of the road were saved for the elderly or to rent in the future.) Land around the village was divided into long, narrow fenceless farms, so that the better and poorer land was shared equally. Each farming strip was given a number corresponding to one of the town lots. They were arranged so that the distance between each town lot and each farm was the same. Common grazing land for cattle was reserved. All the men over twenty-one drew numbers to see which of the plots were to be theirs.

That first night the Janzens slept on the ground under the wagons. They rose at daybreak — four o'clock — and began digging, cutting and stacking pieces of hard prairie sod to form a primitive house called a *semlin*. This half-submerged earth shelter would be their home for two years.

The semlin was dark, for it had only one window. Specks of dirt kept falling from the roof. When it rained, the roof sods leaked, and water often seeped through the walls and ran down and formed puddles on the floor which, because it was just dirt, became muddy. The Janzens had very little furniture: a single bench, their trunks serving both as beds and tables, and their small wood stove.

However, the semlin was the best shelter they or any of their neighbours had time to build, for growing food was more important than comfort. First the thick prairie sod had to be broken. The farmers used oxen to pull their ploughs because horses were not strong enough and could not endure the clouds of mosquitoes rising from the prairie grass. Sometimes, even the oxen would run into the nearest slough to try to escape the mosquitoes. Then stones had to be thrown at them to force them back to work.

That first summer, the men broke only a small part of their land.



Plan of a Mennonite village on the prairies

1. Using a current map, trace the Janzens' journey from Halifax to Manitoba. What kinds of transportation did they use?
2. What hardships did the Janzens face during their first year in Manitoba?
3. What were the advantages of the village plan used by the Prairie Mennonites? Were there disadvantages?

A girl herding cattle with a Mennonite village in the distance. Windmills provided power to grind grain and pump water.

On it they planted flax, sunflowers and watermelons, new crops to Canada that Mennonites had grown successfully in Russia. Around the village and fields they plowed a firebreak eight furrows wide to stop prairie fires that frequently burned wildly across many thousands of hectares.

Greta hauled hundreds of buckets of water from the river to wash clothes and dishes, and to water the radishes, potatoes, onions, and cabbages that she and Tina had planted. Every morning they ran

Aid to Manitoba Mennonites

In 1875 destitute Mennonites in Manitoba received approximately $150 000 in aid because their first crop had been destroyed by grasshoppers. $100 000 was lent by the federal government at 6% (later 4%) interest, and was paid back in full by 1888. Mennonites in Ontario lent $24 000 and gave $26 000. The money, which was administered by Jacob Y. Shantz and a small committee of Ontario Mennonites, was used for food, shelter and farm equipment, and enabled many Manitoba Mennonites to survive.

Just like their ancestors in Russia 100 years earlier, Mennonites in Manitoba used the most readily available material to build their first homes, called semlins. First they removed large chunks of sod. Then they dug about 1 m into the ground and stacked the heavy sods around the hole to form walls. Spindly poplar trees were used to form rafters. More sods were then cut and placed over the rafters to make a roof.

outside to see whether their apple seedling was still healthy. Both girls had heard stories of the horrible plague of grasshoppers that had eaten crops planted by the Mennonites who had arrived in Manitoba the year before.

Fortunately, the Janzens managed to grow enough food to survive. After their small harvest, they hung onions from the rafters, and stored seeds and vegetables in a corner of the semlin. There was nothing left over to sell and, therefore, no extra money to buy clothes, sugar or lard. All their food was strictly rationed, for they had heard about the long, harsh Canadian winters.

All summer, Greta and Tina collected ox and cow manure, which was put into a wide, shallow pit along with mud, straw and water. They mixed it thoroughly by tramping around in it with their bare feet. It was a squishy, smelly job, but a necessary one, for afterwards the mixture was formed into bricks that were dried in the sun. Once dried they were nearly odourless. Then Greta and Tina stacked them ready to be burned as fuel, to keep the family warm during the coming winter.

The first snow fell in late October and it lasted until April. At mid-winter the temperature dropped to −50°C and the blizzards began. The days were long and dark. For eight weeks no one left or came into the village. One January morning Gerhard went to milk the cow and found her frozen to death in the *sarais*, a flimsy animal shelter. After that the Janzens had no more fresh milk, cheese or butter. By March they were reduced to eating three meals a day of bread and a coffee substitute called prips. Prips was made by roasting wheat kernels or bread crumbs in the stove until they were dark brown and then adding water. How Greta hated prips! The smoke of roasting kernels irritated her eyes and the semlin always reeked of them.

There were three deaths in the village that winter. Two children succumbed to typhoid fever and their bodies were wrapped, frozen and stored until spring when the ground thawed enough to dig graves. A man lost his way in a blinding blizzard trying to go to a neighbour's house, only 12 m away. His body was found in the spring.

The Grasshopper Plague

The first Mennonite settlers in Manitoba had their crops destroyed by grasshoppers. In *The Earth is Round* by Margaret Epp, the grasshopper plague is described by Cornelia, a fifteen-year-old girl recently arrived from Russia:

The day Father came into the barn area where Mother was making potato soup Cornelia knew instantly that something was wrong. His face was pale. He walked waveringly, as though he were sick.

"Come, see," he said. . . .

All of them trooped after him, across the yard.

"Listen! Can't you hear?"

"What is it? What is it?"

"Come, see."

He led them to the nearest edge of the fire-guard garden.

"My carrots! My peas! Where are they?" wailed Grandmother. "What's happened?"

They were gone. Where the vegetables had stood in proud young rows, there was nothing now but black earth. And beyond that, the wheat was fast disappearing. Grasshoppers, millions of grasshoppers, had invaded the field and settled on all the stalks of green. . . .

This is death. This is another kind of dying, thought Cornelia wildly. Oh, I want to go back—back to Russia.

Instead, they all went back to their waiting potato soup. Mother served it in silence. They sat down in silence. Even Anton had no question to ask today. When they bowed their heads for prayer, there was a silence for a long moment too. Then Father spoke shakily, "The Lord hath given, the Lord hath taken away. Blest be the name of the Lord, Amen!"

Cornelia often thought of that prayer in the weeks that followed. There were grasshoppers in the house, grasshoppers in the well, grasshoppers in the creek, grasshoppers in the yard. The air was filled with the whirring, spitting creatures. They whirled down on you. They spat at your clothes, and each jet of spit left a tiny hole.

They rustled and they crunched under your feet. No one wanted to go barefoot. Father hastily made a pair of *Schlore* (wooden sandals) for each. You killed grasshoppers with every step you took, but you didn't have to feel the squishy, metallic things under the naked soles of your feet. And no matter how many were killed, there were millions and millions more. The whole settlement was hit by the plague. They faced a bleak winter. Many of the settlers said aloud what Cornelia had thought silently, "I want go back."

THE VILLAGE GROWS

Within three years there were thirty-eight Mennonite villages on the East Reserve, and they had begun to show signs of prosperity. Horses were used for cultivation once the land was broken, and wind breaks were planted to keep the soil from blowing away. Usually, a grist mill was built at one end of the main street, and a threshing machine set up at the other. Often a cross street was surveyed and a school that was also used as a church was constructed. Families began to build larger houses and to purchase not only cows, but pigs, chickens and sheep.

In Greta's village, eight new families arrived and the *Shultz* chose two assistants. Her father was selected as the *Hirtenschultze*, or herdsman inspector. It was his job to know where and how the cattle was pastured. There was also a *Brandshultze*, or fire

The custom of joining houses and barns dates from 1650 when the Mennonites lived in the Vistula River area near Danzig.

inspector. He made rounds every two or three weeks to see that all the chimneys were clean, and that every household had a 5 m ladder with no rungs missing, and a firehook for pulling pails out of wells.

The Janzens shared the communal tasks of improving the road, digging wells, making a bridge over the river, erecting a windmill and constructing a community outdoor oven for baking many loaves of bread at once. In the second spring Greta's baby brother was born in the already cramped semlin. It was time to build a new house.

Cornelius and Gerhard dug holes at 1.2 m intervals and put up poles. They filled the spaces in between with wood and loamy soil. Greta and Tina helped to plaster the walls with mud, and applied white clay as a whitewash. Gerhard whittled latches and wooden hinges for the door. The new house looked like a palace compared to the semlin, now used for livestock. In the centre of the house stood a large brick stove-heater. Inside a specially built square box in the attic hung hams, sausage and bacon that were "cured" by smoke entering the box from a stove pipe that led up from the heater. The smoke exited by another pipe connected to the chimney.

Following an old tradition, Cornelius built his barn adjoining the house. This made it warmer and handier, and safer to reach in harsh weather. Further, he could easily protect his livestock from thieves.

Though they worked as equals on the farm, Mennonite women rarely journeyed to Winnipeg, now a town of 3500 people. Cornelius, however, went frequently. Since he had learned some English in Ontario, he was often entrusted with other villagers' errands. He and Gerhard returned from one trip with their wagon loaded with $400 worth of supplies bought on credit—pots, pans, seeds, sugar, cloth and string. These goods were placed in a corner of the Janzen house and sold to neighbours when needed. Thus the first "store" in the village began. Gerhard kept the accounts, for he excelled in arithmetic.

Gerhard, Greta and Tina attended school from November 1 to Maunday Thursday (the Thursday before Easter). The schoolhouse, a small log and mud structure that was also used as a church,

Mennonite Insurance

Over 300 years ago, Mennonite farmers in Prussia set up an insurance scheme, or *Branntordnung*, to protect themselves against fire losses. Each community elected its own volunteer insurance officers.

When a fire occurred, the officers estimated the value of the burned property and assessed members an amount equal to two-thirds its value. This money was paid to the person incurring the loss. Since premiums were paid only when there was a fire, even the poorest villager could afford to protect himself.

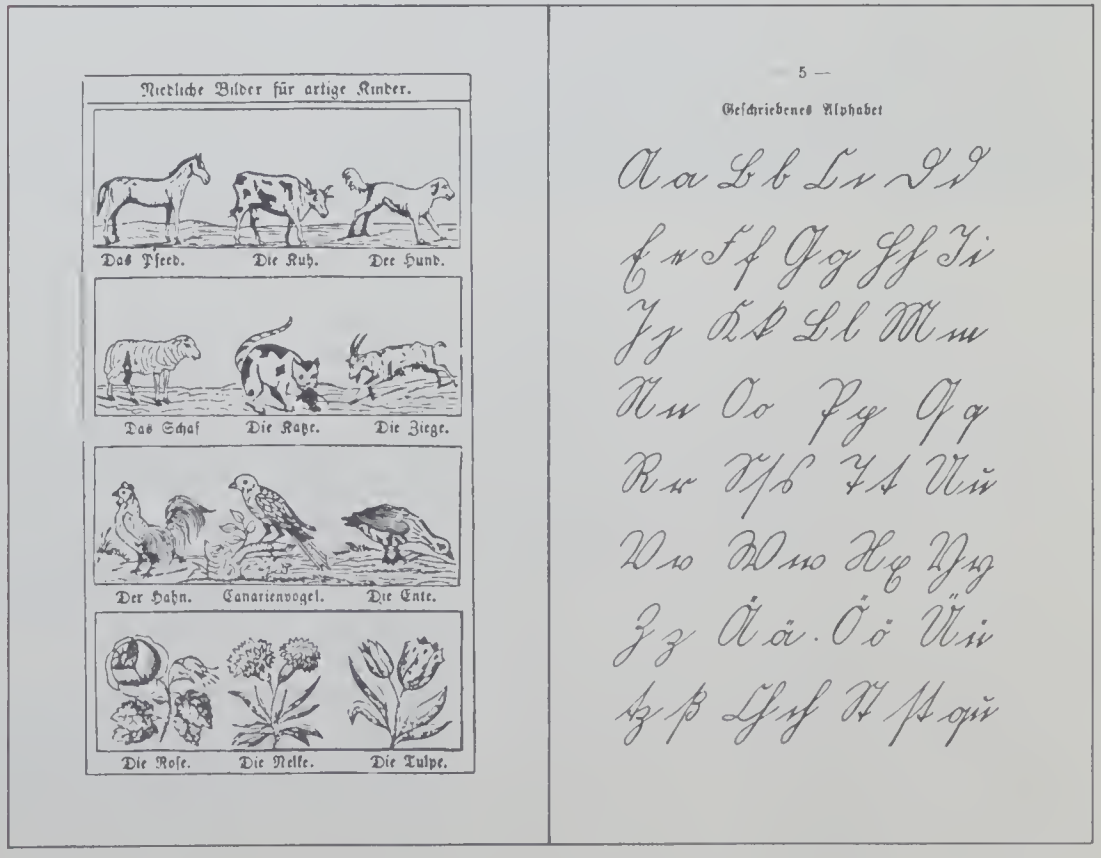
When the Mennonites came to Manitoba in 1874, they continued their Branntordnung. Out of this grew the Red River Valley Mutual Insurance Company and the Manitoba Mennonite Mutual Insurance Company. They are still in business today, and carry property as well as fire insurance.

1. Using library reference books, write a report describing a typical day's work on a prairie farm around 1880 (a) in the spring (b) at harvest time. Consider work done by women and children as well as by men.
2. How did Mennonite farming in Manitoba differ from that in Ontario?
3. Compare schooling in Manitoba (p.47) and Upper Canada (p.19) with your own school. Consider: the school building, equipment, length of school year, textbooks and the purpose of education.

contained no pictures, maps or blackboards. The children sat in groups of four at desk-seat combinations. The boys and girls were separated by an aisle.

Every school day, including Friday, which was test day, began and ended with prayers and the singing of a long hymn. In their classes, taught in German, the children listened to stories about their Mennonite heritage and learned arithmetic, writing and reading. The New Testament, written in High German, was the third grade speller and reader, and in the fourth, fifth and sixth grades the Bible was read from beginning to end several times.

The school term was short so that children could help with farm work, especially during the harvest that began in September. Using scythes, Cornelius and Gerhard cut the wheat in 1.5 m swaths. Greta, Tina and their mother, with the baby tucked into a shawl around her waist, gathered and tied the stalks into upright bundles



This letter book was once used in a Mennonite school in Manitoba. Notice how similar the letters of High German are to those of English.

Several Mennonite families in Winkler, Manitoba, are gathered for a visit. It must have been a special occasion for some Mennonites thought it improper and unlucky to have their picture taken. The elderly people are sitting at the front in a place of respect.

1. How did Gerhard's attitudes differ from those of the more conservative Mennonites?
2. When and why did the Russian village system in Manitoba break down?
3. During the early part of the twentieth century, many Canadians, including Mennonites, moved from farms to the cities. Suggest reasons for this migration.

called sheaves. They were too busy in the fields to cook a hot dinner at noon. Instead they ate quick and easy meals of cured ham, vinegar, raw onions and thick sour milk.

Even during the harvest, the villagers tried to keep every Sunday as a day of worship and rest. They gathered at the school to listen to several sermons, to sing long, slow hymns in unison, and to say silent prayers. Afterwards they ate food prepared the previous day. Greta's favourites were *pluma moos* (fruit soup), rice, pot barley, meat and fried potatoes.

CHANGING TIMES

Within a few years some of the families in the Janzens' villag decided to sell out and move to better farmland on the West Reserv There, new villages were being established by Mennonites recentl arrived from Russia. Others sold their land and bought better farm off the reserves. When they did this, they risked being shunned b the most conservative Mennonites, who wanted the villages t remain strongly disciplined and undivided.

As farmers moved out, more moved in. The Janzens remaine and gradually Gerhard expanded the little store. It soon filled a roon of the house and the buying, selling, and delivering of goods took s much of his time that he gave up farming altogether. This displease many of the older villagers who thought that all true Mennonite should be farmers.

In 1885 Greta was baptized by the bishop at a solemn ceremony in the village church. A year later everyone in the village attended her wedding, held in the yard of her parents' home. She married a Mennonite widower, who worked as a hired hand. Seven years later, he and Greta had saved enough money to buy their own farmland in Saskatchewan, where new Mennonite villages were being established.

Gerhard married in 1894 and remained in his village, even after it was re-surveyed and divided among the residents in 1912. He was sad to see most of the old, tightly disciplined Russian-style villages disappear but realized that there was not enough land in them for

This is the town of Rosthern, Saskatchewan, around 1912, near an early Mennonite settlement. As the Mennonite population grew within the reserves, some families began to migrate westward into Saskatchewan close to the new CPR line. Families such as the Dycks, Wiens, Siemens, Friesens and Ens lived in railway cars while land was purchased and their first shacks were built.

the many Mennonite sons and daughters who wanted to own large grain farms.

Soon, non-Mennonites began to purchase land in Gerhard's neighbourhood and to use the village grist mill and stores. Then Gerhard was glad that he knew how to speak English. His business grew, as did the town. A hospital was built, as well as a bank, a farm implement dealership and a post office. Many conservative Mennonites disliked the flag—the Union Jack—flying above the post office. To them, flags were symbols of nationalism and war and another threat to their way of life.

Gerhard, however, was prepared to accept some changes. He, his wife and three sons decided to leave their conservative congregation and join one of the new Mennonite churches in town, where members sang hymns in English, accompanied by a piano.

Mennonite Cooking

When the Mennonites first came to Canada, they bought very little from stores except molasses and salt. There were few stores and Mennonites had little money to spend in them. Instead they grew and preserved their own food and invented recipes to make use of everything on their farms.

Fruit, such as apples, peaches, grapes and berries, was eaten fresh, canned or made into pies or jam. Beef and pork were salted or cured. A great favourite was summer sausage: ground beef and pork with spices, stuffed into a tight cotton bag much like a large sock and smoked for a week. Sour milk was made into cheese, and sour cream was used in cakes or salads. All bread was made at home and stale bread was fried or used for dumplings. Nothing was wasted.

As the Mennonite settlers became established and more prosperous, their farming skills produced an abundance of cream, butter, flour and eggs. Many traditional Mennonite recipes use these ingredients. Mennonites were the originators of the two-crust pie. Shoo-fly pie, a rich, sweet pie made with brown sugar, molasses, flour and butter, was a favourite.

The hard-working farmers needed a lot of food for energy. Bread, butter, jam, potatoes and coffee were served at every meal. Breadfast was a hearty meal of porridge, coffee cake, and dried prunes and apples cooked together.For noon-time dinner and supper later on in the day, there was soup, a main course of meat, vegetables and dumplings, followed by fruit, pudding, pie, cookies and cake.

Left: Mennonite food from Ontario and the Prairies. Left row, from top to bottom: paska with decorated eggs, sweet cottage cheese spread, kloesse (noodles) with bacon and homemade sausage, apple butter, zwieback. Centre row, left: borscht, sour cream, varenike (noodles stuffed with cottage cheese), pluma moos, pickled beets. Centre row, right: piroschky, ginger cookies, schnitz, pickled corn. Right row: homemade brown bread, shoofly pie, elderberry pie, fried cookies.

Heavy meals like these are less common today. Mennonites usually eat much the same food as their non-Mennonite neighbours. Now and then they like to try traditional recipes: sour cream salad, a sauce of sour cream, sugar, vinegar and finely chopped onion poured over salad greens; schnitz pie, made with apples, sugar, butter and sour cream; or knepp, dried apples boiled with a ham bone and dumplings.

Non-Mennonites enjoy recipes like these too, especially now that many Mennonite cookbooks are available. Lately, special interest has been shown in Mennonite recipes that use natural foods, such as whole wheat flour and buckwheat. Many people, when they think of good food, think of the Mennonites and the old expression that their food "really schmecks" (tastes good).

Here is an easy Mennonite recipe to try.

PLUMA MOOS (FRUIT SOUP)

2 L warm water	125 mL sugar
250 mL seedless raisins	75 mL flour
250 mL dried prunes	2 mL salt
60 mL dried peaches	5 mL cinnamon
60 mL dried apricots	

Wash the fruit, put in a large saucepan and add the warm water. Cook the fruit until it is almost tender. Make a paste with the flour, sugar and salt. Slowly add the flour paste to the cooked fruit and water, stirring constantly. Cook the mixture until it is slightly thickened. Serve the soup warm or cold.

CANADA.

NATIONAL SERVICE

PUBLIC NOTICE is hereby given under the authority of the "War Measures Act, 1914," that during the first week in January, 1917, an inventory will be made by the Post Office Authorities, of every male between the ages of sixteen and sixty-five, residing in Canada.

National Service Cards and addressed envelopes for their return to Ottawa have been placed in the hands of all Postmasters for distribution amongst the persons required to fill in such cards. Every male person of the prescribed ages is required to fill in and return a card enclosed in an envelope within ten days of its receipt.

Any person who fails to receive a card and envelope may obtain the same upon application to the nearest Postmaster.

R. B. BENNETT,
Director General.

Ottawa, 15th December, 1916

GOD SAVE THE KING

Please post in a conspicuous place.

A QUESTION OF LOYALTY

In the decade before World War I, over one million non-English-speaking people came to Canada, most of them from Eastern Europe. Provincial and federal governments worried that these immigrants were not loyal to Britain, and would refuse to fight if war broke out.

After Britain declared war on Germany in 1914, the Mennonites, many of whom still spoke German, were accused of being German sympathizers or even spies. Consequently, mail between relatives in Canada and the United States was suspect; Mennonite German-language newspapers, thought to spread propaganda, were banned; and Mennonite schools in Manitoba were closed or amalgamated with English schools.

Gerhard was deeply troubled by these events and broken promises. Some of his customers questioned him about his attitude to the war and when he stated his Mennonite belief that all war and killing was wrong, they grew angry. He noticed that his business was starting to decline.

CERTIFICATE

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to certify that _____
has been baptised and accepted as member of the Mennonite church.
He is exempted from Military Service by Order-in-Council, dated August 13th 1873 exempting Mennonites from all forms of Military Service.

Dated at the Village of Sommerfeld, Man. this _____ day of _____ 1918.

Signed _____
Bishop of the Mennonite Church.

A Mennonite certificate of exemption from military service, 1918.

One day he, his oldest son Johann, and the other men of the district received registration cards from the National Service Board, wanting to know their ages, occupations and family status. There was great confusion as to what they should do. Johann took courage from the Mennonite men in Ontario who had gone to jail rather than put on a uniform, and boldly declared he would not fill in or return his card. Nevertheless, he and his father were worried.

There was good reason to be, for some Canadians considered all who refused to fight to be pro-German. Even though the Mennonites raised well over half a million dollars for the Patriotic Fund, Victory Loans, and the Red Cross, they were declared "dirty shirkers" and of "no asset to any country" in the newspapers. Gerhard was hurt and angered by such accusations, but would not be pressured to give up his Mennonite beliefs.

In 1917, the Canadian government took away the Mennonites' right to vote. In 1919, Orders-In-Council were passed barring more Mennonites from Canada on the grounds that they were "undesirable, owing to their peculiar customs, habits, modes of living, and methods of holding property, and because of their probable inability...to assume the duties and responsibilities of Canadian citizenship within a reasonable time after entry."

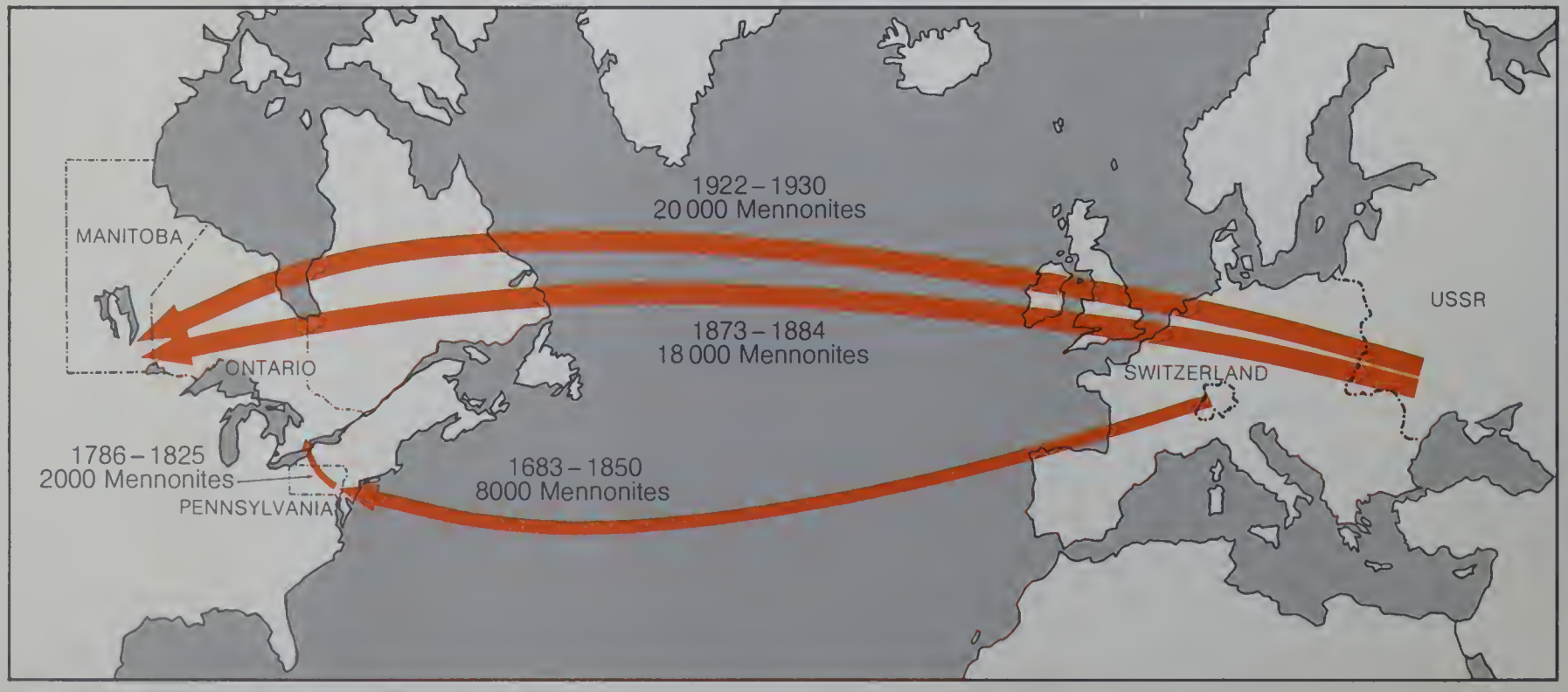
Even after the Mennonites regained the vote, and government legislation allowed more to immigrate, some Mennonites could not forget the treatment they had received. They were disillusioned and no longer wished to live in Canada. Between 1921 and 1930, 2000 Mennonites from Saskatchewan and about 6000 from Manitoba—fully one-third of the province's Mennonite population—emigrated to Mexico, Central America and Paraguay.

1. Suggest reasons why the Mennonites were distrusted during World War I.
2. Why did many Mennonites emigrate to Mexico, Central America and Paraguay between 1921 and 1930?
3. Consider the description of the Mennonites given in the Orders-in-Council of 1919. As a Canadian Mennonite, what arguments could you have made to disprove this description?
4. Debate the following statement: It is your duty as a citizen to fight for your country.
5. Canada's immigration policies have changed considerably over the years. Invite an immigration officer to your class to discuss how they have changed and what the current regulations are.

More Janzens Come to Canada

By the 1920s, Greta and her brother Gerhard were in their sixties. Since their children were grown, they could now afford to give more time and money to the church. They became involved in an international relief organization called the Mennonite Central Committee.

This organization had been formed to help the approximately 110 000 Mennonites in Russia who had been caught in the midst of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. Even though they tried to remain neutral, they were, as landowners, targets of abuse. Their crops were burned, their orchards plundered, their livestock stolen. Some Mennonites were sent to Siberian exile, and the rest had to pay high



Mennonite Migrations to North America 1683–1930

This young Mennonite girl emigrated from Russia in the 1920s. Many of the Mennonite refugees who came to Canada at this time were orphans or widows with young children.

taxes or lose their land. In addition, there was widespread crop failure and drought in Russia in the early 1920s. Many Mennonites were starving.

At first the MCC intended to raise money to help the Russian Mennonites improve their farmland, or rent or buy new land, and buy food, tractors and seeds. In Saskatchewan, Greta attended church bazaars, busily stitched and sold quilts and packed bales of clothing for Russian brethren. In Manitoba, Gerhard held auction sales and persuaded businessmen to contribute to the relief fund.

Their friend, Mr. Klassen, was one of the three Canadian Mennonites who went to Russia to see the problems firsthand. They were horrified at the desperate situation there. Hospitals had no doctors, medicine, sheets or sanitary water, and typhoid epidemics were breaking out. Cholera killed thousands more.

Immediately the MCC changed its goal to helping as many Mennonites as possible leave Russia. Volunteers set up soup kitchens just outside the Russian border to harbour and feed fleeing refugees. At one point there were 140 kitchens feeding 40 000 people a day. Over one million dollars was raised by North American Mennonites to purchase clothes and medicine for the refugees.

In the confusion of war and revolution Greta and Gerhard had lost letter contact with their relatives still in Russia. They prayed for their safety. Gerhard became part of a delegation that travelled to Ottawa to persuade Prime Minister Mackenzie King to let more Mennonites immigrate. King, who knew many Mennonites, had been the member of parliament for the riding of Waterloo North from 1908 to 1911 and tried his best to help. Through him the Mennonites' right to vote was returned, and the Canadian government was finally persuaded to take 20 000 Mennonites from Russia.

In the summer of 1925, the two sons of Greta's favourite cousin Hans—Peter and Walter, with their wives and children—arrived ר Manitoba. Amidst tears of joy they told their stories of Russia: how they had fled in fear for their lives from their small farm to the village after all the cattle and pigs had been stolen; how they found that the village was no safer, because soldiers were billeted in

1. In what ways did the Mennonite Central Committee aid the Russian Mennonites?
2. What is the attitude of the Canadian government today towards refugees? Find some recent articles on the topic. Write to your federal Member of Parliament, asking for information on government policy.
3. After reading carefully the information you have gathered, discuss whether Canada should continue to allow refugees into the country.

Mennonite homes to spy on them; how they were forbidden to worship and their church was turned into a theatre; and how those who had protested had been shot dead by the soldiers. Peter shook with emotion as he told about the night his father and his eldest brother had been taken away. He and his family praised God for the miracle of being safe in Canada.

Peter and his family went to Saskatchewan with Greta, and Walter and his family stayed with Gerhard's younger sons. Other Mennonite refugees moved onto farms vacated by Canadian Mennonites who had gone to Mexico and South America. Still others worked for Ontario Mennonites and quickly accustomed themselves to the Pennsylvania Dutch language, still spoken there occasionally. As required by law the *Russlaenders* worked on farms for at least one year and received no medical or financial assistance from the government. They began to pay back their debt to the CPR, to whom they were most grateful for allowing them passage to Canada on credit.

Peter Janzen rented 40 ha of farmland from a Mennonite and was told he could pay when his crop was harvested. Similarly, he was able to obtain a horse, seed and food. There were no written agreements, for Mennonites trusted each other. In a few years the family had saved enough money to move to their own farm.

After his compulsory year of farm labour Walter went to work in the Janzens' store. He was anxious to learn English and to have his children attend schools as they had in Russia. Like many other Russlaender sons and daughters, they wanted to enter trades and professions rather than farm. They moved to Winnipeg as soon as they had enough money and, though they continued to worship with Mennonites on Sundays, openly declared that they did not want to live apart from the rest of society.

A Mennonite refugee camp in Hamburg, Germany.

The Mennonite Central Committee

The Mennonite Central Committee was formed in 1920 by Mennonites across North America to help their brethren in Russia. MCC volunteers persuaded the Soviet government to allow Mennonites to leave the country and encouraged countries such as Canada to accept them as immigrants.

For over 50 years the MCC has tried to reunite Mennonite families separated by persecution and wars. During World War II the MCC began to help non-Mennonites, especially children who were evacuated from bombed British cities. More recently, it has aided refugees in South East Asia, and smoothed the way for Canadian Mennonite congregations to sponsor refugee families who want to begin a new life in Canada.

Today the Mennonite Central Committee has over 700 men and women working in more than 40

countries. Each volunteer serves for two or three years and is paid living and travelling expenses plus a monthly allowance. Mennonites often live with the families they are trying to help so that they can know them well and understand their needs.

Many MCC workers help to plant crops, build houses, and give practical advice on farming methods and nutrition. Some volunteers work in factories, teach in schools or run medical clinics. Others run the MCC Self-Help project, which encourages craftspeople in twenty countries to earn a living by producing craft items. These are exported to North America and sold at Self-Help shops and relief sales.

Most Mennonites support the MCC with money, work and prayers, and are proud of its success.

Opposite page: A Sunday School teacher in the Ochos Rios Mennonite church in Jamaica.

Below : A MCC health worker discusses disease prevention, sanitation and nutrition with Bolivian students training to be teachers.

Above: A Mennonite from Steinbach, Manitoba is teaching a student in Jamaica technical skills.

This Mennonite mother and her four children are pictured in a Mennonite refugee camp in Germany, 1945. Since World War II, 8000 Mennonites have come to Canada from the Soviet Union.

DEPRESSION AND WAR

For four summers during the Great Depression — the hungry years of the 1930s — there was little rain on the Prairies. Peter Janzen watched the wind blow away the top soil of his Saskatchewan farm in great dust storms that sometimes lasted three days. The family, however, had enough to eat. They raised their own beef — for at $3.00 per steer it wasn't worth selling — and grew vegetables to survive. Money was scarce. In Manitoba, Walter and Johann bartered store goods for their farm customers' eggs, milk, chicken and cord wood. At one point they had three years' supply of wood!

Members of their congregation shared food, hand-me-down clothing and taxed themselves 10¢ per month to help other Mennonites who were sick, bankrupt or destitute. Only a few were forced to ask for government relief when they lost their jobs. Throughout all the hardships, the Russlaenders remembered a far worse depression in Russia and were thankful to be in Canada.

When World War II began in 1939, Walter's two grandsons, who were teachers in Winnipeg, registered as conscientious objectors. They were sent by the federal government to labour in British Columbia forestry camps for the war years. They were upset to hear that some Mennonite boys had given in to public pressure and joined the army. Peter, who still had nightmares about World War I and the Russian Revolution, was glad to be far removed from the battlefields of Europe. The drought ended and he, his sons and grandsons thankfully grew wheat to feed Canadian soldiers.

Toward the end of the war, the Janzens heard through the Red Cross their first news in ten years about their Russian brethren. Many of the men had been forced into the Russian army and had been lost in the fighting. Some Mennonites had been so desperate to escape work camps and near-starvation that they had fled from Russia with the retreating German army.

After the war Walter went to West Germany to help search for refugees related to Canadian Mennonites. He found his lost brother's wife, her two grandchildren and her son-in-law in a Mennonite refugee camp, and brought them to Canada.

The traditional Fraktur symbols of birds, vines, hearts and flowers are featured on this handsome quilt, displayed by two Mennonite women at a relief sale.

In the 1960s Walter and Peter's older brother was finally freed from Russia. By this time he was a feeble old man whose feet were permanently crippled from the war years when he had owned no shoes. He was broken from worry about his family, lost to him for almost thirty years.

By the time he arrived in Canada his grandchildren were grown and were parents themselves. He was amazed to find most Canadian Mennonites living and working alongside and often indistinguishable from other Canadians. He ended his days peacefully in a Mennonite old age home, close to his new-found family.

The Mennonite Relief Sales

Since 1958, North American Mennonites have organized sales of food and handicrafts to raise money for the international relief work of the Mennonite Central Committee. Today, almost 20% of MCC funds come from these relief sales.

The town of New Hamburg, Ontario, nearly 18 km west of Kitchener, has held a relief sale every May since 1967. More than 40 000 visitors flock to the town, attracted by the Mennonite food and by the auction of hundreds of fine handmade quilts. Over half the money raised by the sale comes from the auction, where a single quilt may fetch as much as $2500. On the day of the sale, 1500 volunteers are on duty; thousands more have been involved in preparing the items to be sold. Some of the volunteers stay up all night before the sale baking and cooking, so that the food to be sold at the pancake breakfast and the buffet lunch will be as fresh as possible. During the course of the one-day event, hungry visitors consume 3500 home-made pies, 900 kg of cheese, 450 kg of sausage, 1000 jars of jams, jellies and pickles, and 9800 apple fritters.

These teenage volunteers are trying to control a flood at Rosenort, Manitoba in May 1979.

THE MARTINS AND THE JANZENS MEET AGAIN

On a warm April day in 1979, nineteen-year-old Susan Martin of Kitchener, Ontario hurried to her local Mennonite church. Mr. Friesen, the Mennonite Disaster Service chairman of her congregation, had telephoned to arrange an urgent meeting. When Susan arrived he was already explaining to the eight or nine other

The Mennonite Disaster Service

The Mennonite Disaster Service grew out of the Mennonites' desire to help one another quickly and efficiently in time of natural disaster. If someone's house or barn was destroyed by a flood, a storm or a tornado, Mennonite men and women could be counted upon to gather, often unasked, from miles around to help repair the damage. In 1951, the Mennonite Disaster Service was organized in the United States in order to give help on a larger scale. The first Canadian groups were formed in 1958. Today about 2700 Mennonite Congregations in North America participate in the MDS. Each of these has a representative who can be contacted if a large number of volunteers or donations of supplies and money are needed quickly. The MDS is willing to help anyone in need, not just Mennonites.

people present that immediate help was needed in Manitoba. Damage caused by the annual flooding of the Red and Souris rivers was much worse than usual this spring.

Susan had seen television news reports showing volunteers filling and stacking sandbags around villages to keep out the flood waters. Others had helped farmers to move their cattle, pigs and chickens to higher ground so that they wouldn't drown. Emergency cafeterias and sleeping dorms had been set up in the towns to feed those who were forced to leave their farms. Mr. Friesen reported that many of the volunteers were Prairie Mennonites.

Now the crest of the flood waters had passed and families were returning to their water- and mud-damaged homes. They would need help to clean up. Susan and the others at the meeting decided to telephone everyone in the congregation to find out who could go to Manitoba to be part of a mop-up crew; who would like to donate money to help buy food and supplies; and who had clothing, blankets or food to send to Manitoba.

Susan had never worked at the site of a major disaster before. She had finished her university classes for the year, however, and had another two weeks free before starting her summer job. At suppertime she talked to her parents and it was decided that she should go to Manitoba. The congregation would pay for her transportation and Mennonites at the flood site would see that she had a bed and plenty to eat.

At about the same time Susan Martin was discussing her plans with her parents, another Mennonite family meeting was taking place on a farm near Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. The Janzen family—mother, father and four grown children—were also aware of the emergency in Manitoba and were considering how they should help the MDS with its work. They were especially worried because they had relatives in one of the small flooded towns. Since it was too early to plant crops on their farm, they decided to go and help with the clean-up campaign.

They knew that the work—shovelling mud out of basements, repairing roads, bringing home livestock—would be time-consuming, dirty and exhausting. However, it seemed a small price

1. Invite a Mennonite Disaster Service representative from a local Mennonite congregation to talk about ways that MDS volunteers have given help in Canada and in other countries.
2. Communal work and volunteer service are an essential part of Mennonite life. Give examples of the ways in which Mennonites helped themselves and others (a) in pioneer times in Upper Canada (b) on the prairies in the 1870s (c) after the Russian Revolution (d) today.

to pay for the rewarding feeling of giving help in a time of need. As well, they could look forward to meeting Mennonites from across Canada and the United States, for many congregations in North America would be sending help and volunteers.

Susan Martin had never been to the Prairies and was not prepared for the vast, flat plains nor the miles upon miles of flood water that completely covered farms, road and fences. From the airplane, southern Manitoba looked like one big lake. The MDS temporary field headquarters in Winnipeg sent her south and east by boat. She arrived at a small town that had been reduced to a main street and houses completely surrounded by a 2 m wall of sandbags to keep out the muddy water. Susan became part of a crew that was responsible for unloading boat loads of food and carrying it to kitchens in the town's Mennonite churches, where families from nearby flooded farms were being looked after. She was billeted with a family called Janzen and their cousins from Saskatchewan.

Members of the two families came to know one another. In the evenings, after work, Susan told about the Martin family, which had lived in Ontario for over 170 years. In return, she learned about the Janzens, the store that they had established in the town almost 100 years earlier, and the sad history of their Russian relatives. Susan discovered that one of the Janzen aunts had known her mother years before, when both women were medical missionaries with the MCC in Africa. On Sunday Susan attended church with the Janzens. There they sang the old familiar German hymn "A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing" with new insight, and prayed to God for strength and courage to fight the flood.

Susan was disappointed when her voluntary time was up. Never had two weeks passed more quickly, nor been so worthwhile. She exchanged addresses and telephone numbers with the Janzens and invited them to visit Ontario in October after the harvest.

On the plane back to Ontario, she planned her report to the congregation. She had hands calloused from hard work, new friends to tell about, and a deeper understanding of her Mennonite heritage. She now knew first-hand how her ancestors had overcome hardships by working together.

The Kitchener Farmers' Market

Mennonites in Ontario sell meat, fruit, vegetables and crafts to the public at several popular "farmers' markets." The most famous of these is the Kitchener Market.

Farmers sometimes rise as early as 3:30 a.m. to bring their produce to the market, which opens at 5:00 a.m. The 400 vendors—both Mennonite and non-Mennonite—stand in their "stalls" behind counters or tables displaying homemade bread, cheese, meat, pies and doughnuts, honey and candy. In the wintertime there are also dried apples, sausages, chickens, puppies and knitted mitts and hats. Pussy willows, maple syrup and seeds are sold in the springtime; and in the summer and autumn—the busiest time of all—fruit, fresh vegetables and flowers are for sale. In October and November the market looks like a Christmas bazaar, for Mennonite women make doilies, quilts and decorations to sell.

The market began in the small town of Berlin (Kitchener) in 1839. In those days it was the custom for Mennonites to trade their fruit and vegetables for sugar, lard and goods such as string and paper that they could not make themselves. They sold their leftover produce to the public.

Today, the market is located in Market Square, a large office and shopping complex in downtown Kitchener.

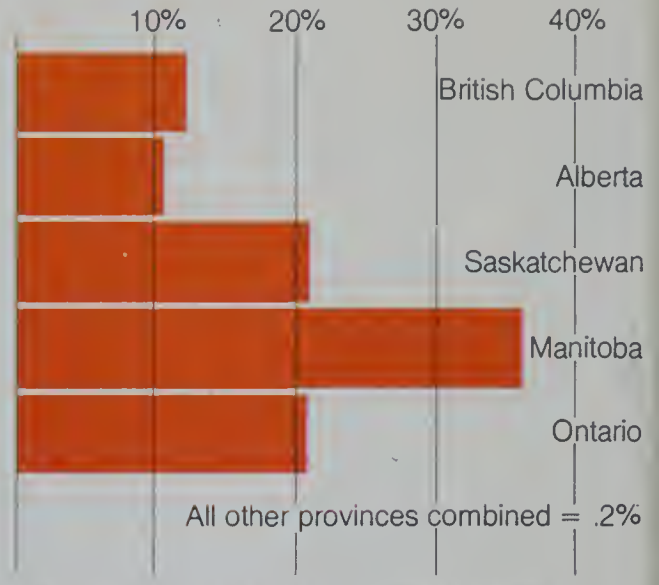
A stall at the Kitchener Market. What is being sold?

Mennonite Canadians Today

The strength of the approximately 83 000 baptized Mennonites in Canada today lies not only in their national organizations, (such as the Mennonite Central Committee and the Mennonite Disaster Service), but in the daily lives of individuals belonging to the more than 500 small congregations across the country. No two are exactly alike. There are urban, suburban and country churches, grouped into more than a dozen affiliations or associations, and ranging from the very conservative Old Order to the Evangelical Mennonite Conference. Many people have been attracted to the simple and practical Mennonite way of life. Today English congregations are growing and there are new Chinese congregations in Vancouver and Toronto, and French-speaking Mennonites in Quebec.

The Mennonites' public institutions are expressions of their Christian faith. Homes for the aged, often built next door to churches, are cheerful, comfortable places where elderly members receive respectful care from bilingual (English and German) staff and volunteers. Mennonite hospitals and rehabilitation centres, counselling services, Bible colleges and religious book stores are gladly supported because they are thought of as places of worship in action. In the ten Mennonite secondary schools, found in four provinces, staff members rarely teach formal religious studies, but rather, try to impart Christian attitudes in all subjects. Many non-Mennonites attend these schools, as well as Conrad Grebel College—a liberal arts college founded by Mennonites in 1961 and affiliated with the University of Waterloo.

Over the years many Mennonite men and women have entered business, politics and the professions. Others have stayed and modernized their farms. Wherever they may be, most are English-speaking and indistinguishable from other Canadians. Nevertheless, Mennonites take care to preserve and share their cultural heritage. They organize and participate in frequent music



Percentage Distribution of Mennonites in Canada

1. The bar graph shows the distribution of Mennonites across Canada. Where do most Mennonites live? Suggest reasons for this pattern.
2. There are approximately 83 000 baptized Mennonites in Canada today. Use the graph to determine the approximate number that are found in each of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario.

How Mennonites See Themselves Today

The Mennonite story in Canada is one of struggle during early settlement, a hope for faithful Christian community, a willingness to contribute its resources to a larger society—in short, a concern to express beliefs in a practical and concrete manner.

"to believe and do
to confess and obey
to reconcile and forgive
to love and serve
to sacrifice and give
to love and work together
to demonstrate that there is another way."

—A Statement from the
Mennonite Central Committee

and art festivals, such as the annual Festival of the Arts in Kitchener; they maintain several historical societies that preserve Mennonite documents and pictures and publish journals; and they establish pioneer villages, museums and cultural centres, such as the Heritage Centre in Winnipeg. It is an attractive modern building that houses offices, meeting rooms, and a book store, and displays historical crafts and artifacts. All of these special events, organizations, and places are meant for everyone to visit and appreciate.

Canadian Mennonites are part of a world-wide body of Mennonites. In more than forty countries these Christians quietly and efficiently maintain and teach their beliefs. Mennonites have become famous for their insistence on non-resistance, and are respected by many as a people of conscience.

Right: This windmill, erected in 1977 as a memorial to early Mennonite pioneers, is a replica of the first windmill built in Steinbach, Manitoba in 1877.

A group of Old Colony Mennonites. Most members of the Old Colony live on the Prairies. They are descendants of immigrants from the Old Colony of Choritza, one of the earliest Mennonite colonies in Russia. Many still speak Low German.

Since 1925, Mennonites from 44 countries around the world have met at a world conference every four to six years to visit, sing, pray and learn from each other. 16 000 attended the conference held in the United States in 1978. Mennonites are no longer an ethnic group, but a world-wide Christian denomination including many languages and cultures.

A Mennonite choir. Mennonites consider music to be a tribute to God, and throughout their history, hymn singing has been an important and enjoyable part of their lives. Today, some Mennonites study and teach music and belong to professional orchestras and choirs.

Every year each Mennonite in the Ontario Conference gives money to support Conrad Grebel College in Waterloo, named after an early Swiss Anabaptist.

Left: Rudy Wiebe is one of Canada's most talented writers. Many of his novels and stories describe Mennonites who have struggled to reconcile their German-speaking past with the urban English society in which they live today.

Opposite page: A Mennonite farmer ploughing his land in Waterloo County.

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Mennonite students in Steinbach.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

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Films

Joshua's Confusion (16mm 24 min., colour)
(Multimedia Program Productions Inc., Cincinnati, Ohio, 1977). A young Amish boy questions his family traditions and religious beliefs after he has been invited to a party at a schoolmate's house.

Plain People (16mm, 28 min., colour)
(Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 1972; Distributed by Visual Education Centre, 75 Horner Ave., Toronto, Ontario M87 4X5). Documentary about Mennonites near Elmira. Shows their peaceful life close to the earth.

Filmstrips

The Mennonites (Ethos Ltd., 2250 Midland Avenue, Scarborough, Ontario M1P 3E6). Four filmstrips, four cassettes, a reading script and activity sheets.

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